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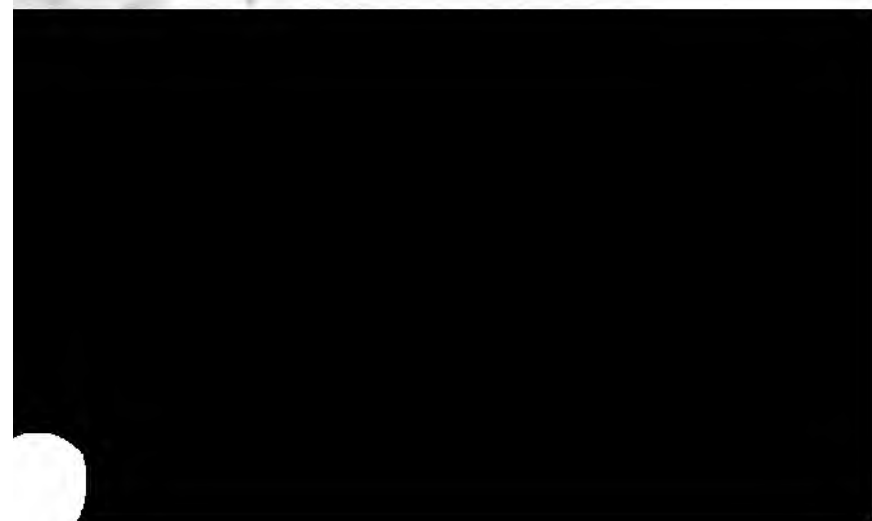
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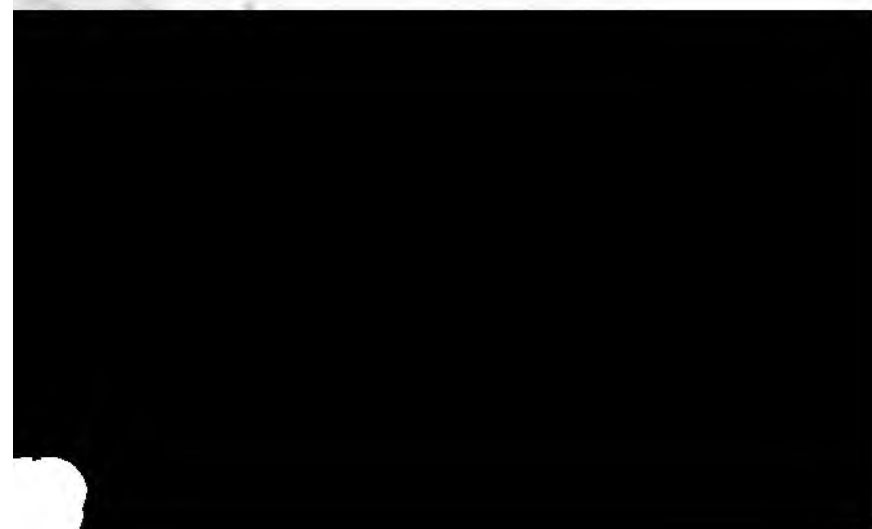


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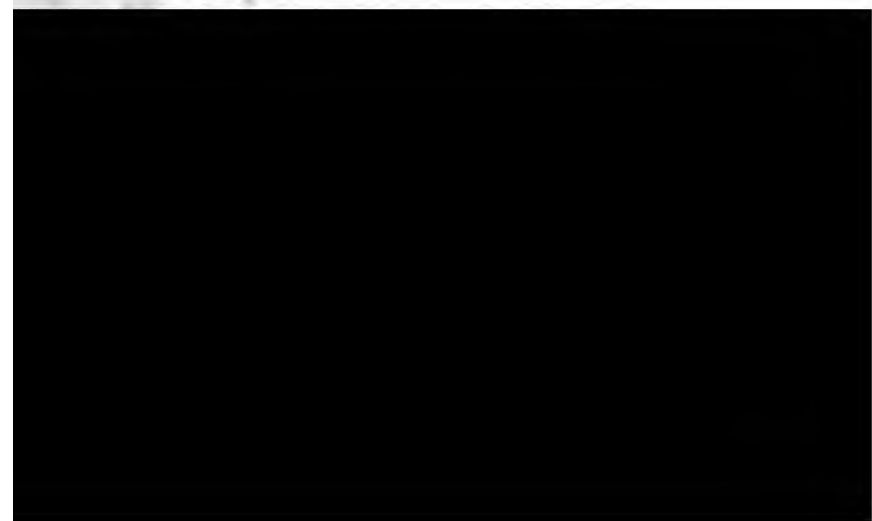
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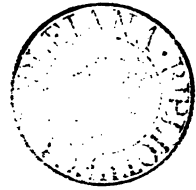
A

COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL SERMONS.

BY CLERGYMEN

OF THE

ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF IRELAND



DUBLIN:

WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. AND CO. DUBLIN;
AND L. B. SEELEY, AND SON, LONDON.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Publishers of the IRISH PULPIT, hope that the novelty of their attempt, will account for and excuse any deficiency in its execution, and that their humble exertions to extend the knowledge of the character of the Irish Church, will deserve the approbation of the public. It has arisen solely from a wish that the talents of the clergy of that church should be better known, their pulpit exhortations duly appreciated, and their Christian labours fairly estimated : that the benefit of their exertions should not be limited by the congregations to whom they were immediately directed ; but while they were crowned with success in the confined sphere of their duty,

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Into such a plan as that of the Pulpit, it must be obvious, that unity of design cannot enter; and perhaps shades of doctrine may be discovered in it, such as will ever mark the progress of independent minds, that bring energy and piety to the examination of divine truth. The publishers, however, trust that one species of unity will be found—*the unity of scriptural truth*, and that the exertions of all, will be acknowledged to harmonize in one common end, GLORY TO GOD, PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN.

To the gentlemen who have kindly com-

municated their Sermons, the Publishers return their most grateful acknowledgments ; and they trust that the reception which this volume will meet with, will enable them to increase on a future occasion, the number of those to whom they will have to offer their thanks.

Dublin, December 1, 1826.

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THE IRISH PULPIT.

SERMON I.

REV. III. 15, 16.

I WOULD THOU WERT COLD OR HOT. SO THEN BECAUSE
THOU ART LUKEWARM, AND NEITHER COLD NOR HOT, I
WILL SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH.

THIS denunciation has been awfully fulfilled. Laodicea, once a flourishing city, and the mother-church of sixteen bishoprics, cannot now, says Bishop Newton, boast an ancho-rite's or hermit's cell, where God's name is invoked and praised.

But lukewarmness was not peculiar to the Laodiceans. It belongs to every age; and the infection is at this moment among ourselves. Who then are the lukewarm? They are not, we can at once reply, either the pious, on the one hand, or the openly wicked, on the other. They are often what are called good neighbours—obliging acquaintances—agreeable members of society. They dis-

countenance every indecorum, and every levity which would lower a decent tone of manners. Nor in things purely religious are they ranged upon the professedly hostile side. They consider religion as useful to the state, friendly to the laws, fitted peculiarly to improve and regulate the lower orders of the community. They attend with tolerable punctuality on the public ordinances of the church; in their families, and in their closets too, they are not wholly negligent of religious forms. They come up, in short, precisely to that point in religious strictness, which the world allows and sanctions. Nay, they are often held up as patterns, and are appealed to as instances how a person may be good without running into extremes—be truly religious, and neither singular, severe, or gloomy.—These are the lukewarm. They do not wallow in vice; they do not sin openly with a high hand. But they want the main spring of good. They have no tenderness of heart, no drawing of the soul, no soft humility, no filial fear, no sensibility, no love towards God: and wanting this master-principle, this heavenly seed, this root of blessedness, all is false and hollow. There is no life or soul in this show of little decencies, this paltry exhibition of empty forms. It is all blighted fruit, with-

out sun to ripen it; a withered branch, cut off from the sustaining vine. And thus it is that the lukewarm, with all his negative virtues and fair outside, is an abomination in the sight of God: that while the world looks on, perhaps, and almost worships him as an idol, God may look down and rank him lower, and mark him for deeper damnation, than he does the wretch who drinks in impurity like water, or than he does the midnight ruffian, who ends a life of public crimes upon the scaffold.

Make the case your own. Suppose you had conferred on two persons, with an unsparing hand, all the tokens of disinterested, boundless affection:—that you had come forward at the cry of their distress—that you had saved their lives—that you had wiped away their tears—that you had struck off the chains of their captivity, and led them forth to light and liberty. Suppose, also, that in this ministration of mercy, you had encountered the most trying difficulties; brought down upon yourself accumulated misfortunes; and waded through seas of trouble and of sorrow, far deeper than all the waters that had gone over their souls. Suppose then these two persons, owing life and all its hopes to you, to go forth into the world—One of them, betrayed by faithless promises, misled by bad example, overpowered by

strong temptation, and carried headlong by tempestuous passion—Suppose him, I say, in this mad career of vice, to lose all sober calculation, to sacrifice fortune, prospects, health and every thing; and in this state of desperation, to shun the presence of that friend whose goodness he had abused, to grow weary of your expostulations, and at last burdened by obligation, stung and goaded by a sense of his own ingratitude, to assume the posture of stern hostility and defiance.

Suppose the other, whose deliverance you had thus dearly purchased, to take an opposite direction on the wide field of life; and by cautious management, and prudent calculations of his own interest, to gain a fair character, and to reap all the fruits of established reputation. After a long interval, suppose that you, his friend in need, his succourer in distress, call at the door of this respected person. You anticipate that emotion of soul, that luxury of feeling, which such a meeting might indeed well produce. But no—you find something at once that checks these forward beatings of the heart. You look around, and can scarce believe it; but still all bespeaks that you are received with cool civility, and formal distance. You hardly trust your senses, when you see no gratitude in those eyes, from which

you had once wiped off the tears—when you ascertain, beyond the semblance of doubt, that your kindness is just remembered, but without one tender feeling of it; that so much acknowledgment will be given, and no more; that you may save yourself the pains of further explanation, that the heart is steeled and the mind made up.

Now, my brethren, which of these would you rank the lowest? Is it the frenzied wretch who renounces reason, sense, and interest, and flings them all to the winds of heaven? Or is it not rather the prudent manager, who feels his own heart at ease while his benefactor's heart is wounded; who, in a word, can talk of conscience in any other matter, while the heavy charge is still unanswered, of having wronged and injured his friend and his deliverer? No—in spite of all his popularity, you would know a secret of that man, which would blight and blacken every action of his life.—He might appear virtuous to others, but you would know that he was incapable of virtue: you would know that he had a bad heart, and from a bad heart no real good can flow.

Such is the illustration I submit to you; and it will, I think, explain why it is, that in the eyes of God, the vilest sinner may often be less hateful than the wise and prudent of this

world. They are both ungrateful to the kindest benefactor, the most generous of all friends. But, surely, the deeper shade of baseness and degeneracy belongs not to the conscious wretch who flies affrighted from his presence, but to the man who, on settled principle, withholds the fulness of his heart from God, who makes a calm and deliberate distribution, gives part to the world, and presents the impious offering of the rest to heaven.

But besides the guilt of such a state, the means of recovery from it are peculiarly difficult. The man who lives in open sin, cannot mistake the nature of his conduct: he cannot commit murder, or adultery, without knowing that he is a transgressor of the law. But these outward and positive commands the lukewarm do not transgress. Against that law, whose seat and sanctions are in the soul, they do indeed sin with a high hand. But the danger is, that they can do this without knowing it. The spirituality of God's law is veiled from their eyes. All beyond the forms of religion, they soberly consider as enthusiasm. Talk to them of faith, as that by which the mind holds converse with the eternal and unseen world—talk to them of the love of God, as a principle of the purest happiness, as heaven already opened in the soul—and they do not heave a sigh,

because they cannot see or feel these blessed truths; but in candour and sincerity they think them wild fancies, eccentric notions, dangerous delusions. And thus while the open offender sins against his conscience, and carries about him a monitor, who, though unheeded, warns him; the lukewarm rejects the Gospel with the full sanction of his own judgment. The one disobeys his director, but may, at some happier moment, follow him. The other has seduced, or rather bewildered, his guide, and now goes after a blind leader of the blind. How awful is this state! If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! Nor will it avail in extenuation to say, no man can be blamed for acting and thinking as his convictions lead. Perhaps the heaviest charges against the reprobate at the day of final reckoning will be, that they have perverted their moral sense, that they have abused their conscience, that they were capable of thinking as they did. "There is a way," says Solomon, "which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Guarded by discretion and by worldly prudence, the lukewarm shun those snares, and escape those miseries, which nevertheless often arrest us in a course of sin, and call the peni-

tent back to God. The outcast from the pale of human intercourse, fainting in the deep waters, and buffeting with the waves of infamy and destitution, is sometimes driven, by these very extremities, to the throne of grace. He feels his lost estate—he flies for pardon to the blood of Jesus—he calls on God in his trouble, and he delivers him out of his distress. Here the remedy is hazardous indeed, altogether desperate in the case of any who could, on calculation, try the experiment, and venture down the precipice themselves. Nevertheless by thus feeling sin in all its horrors, brands have been sometimes plucked out of the burning—souls have been converted to God—publicans and harlots have passed the gates of heaven, and left the self-righteous, the wavering, and the lukewarm behind, in outer darkness.

But the evil stops not here. The lukewarm are to others the instruments of a delusion no less fatal than their own. And in no instance does this more lamentably appear, than where their influence and counsels come in contact with a soul just upon the point of turning from darkness unto light.

A man has, perhaps, been living like the world around him; outwardly decent, but inwardly a stranger unto God. In this state,

conscience shines for a moment with a truer light, and refuses to say peace where there is no peace. The slumberer begins to doubt whether this heartlessness in religion may not be the sleep of death; and whether Christianity may not be, after all, that very thing which he had scorned, and scouted as fanaticism and folly. Here the lukewarm often interpose. They are at a loss to know why one so punctual in his duties, should now imagine that any change is necessary. They resolve all these notions into mere low spirits, or nervous dejection. They dread the consequences: they are fearful lest this melancholy should end in loss of life, or reason; and thus every expedient is tried, every engine set at work, to persuade the unhappy sinner that all his scruples were but fancies; to ply him with business, or hurry him on with what are called amusements, till all these fancies are, indeed, effectually forgotten—till the struggle is over, and the soul goes down again into the darkness of this present world.

But we may picture to ourselves a still more affecting instance of this kind; and would to God that a melancholy experience did not furnish us with examples. A heedless youth has been, we will suppose, pursuing the mad career of wild extravagance, and been sunk in all the

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horrors of abandoned profligacy. In the midst of this, the Spirit of God moves upon his soul—God says, let there be light, and there is light. He is brought to see his real state, and real misery ; his ingratitude to heaven—the terrors of an offended God—the wretchedness that surrounds him—the blessedness he has thrown away. He calls to mind his father's house ; he remembers the days of former innocence, and scenes of early purity.—He determines on a change of life ; and at such a moment, naturally turns to some friendly bosom for advice, support, guidance, and instruction. But whom is he to turn to?—To whom is he to open out the secret that labours in his soul?—To whom is he to address himself, and say, “What must I do to be saved?” If, indeed, he meet at this important period with some experienced and faithful Christian, he can feel for his case and prescribe the remedy—He can direct the trembling penitent to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—He can lead the hungry and thirsting soul to the wells of salvation, and to the bread that came down from heaven. But, alas ! such counsellors are not always to be met with. To a mind humbled, and a spirit broken, such as I have represented this young man's to be, every prudent, decent character

is often magnified by a comparison with its own demerits, into one of the excellent of the earth, and is looked up to, as if placed upon a lofty eminence. What then if the penitent betakes himself to one of these, and receives from him the counsels of the lukewarm. (I can myself vouch for it that such counsels are sometimes given.)

“ I am delighted to find that you are at last
 “ sensible of your folly. Besides the great
 “ impropriety of your conduct altogether, you
 “ had seriously injured your property. You
 “ had offended your best friends, and quite
 “ sunk below your natural level in society.
 “ But do not be discouraged: you are still
 “ young, and people will make allowances.
 “ You will now become, I trust, a steady
 “ character. You will regain a respectable
 “ character in the world, and be as much liked
 “ and as well received as any one.”

In the day of judgment it will be known, how many souls this sort of, what is called, sensible advice, has ruined. There may be a few formal words added about religion; but formal words about religion might as well be spared. The main drift, and spirit, and effect of such advice is, to take the soul at the feverish crisis of its thirst for life and immortality, and to lead it to the broken cisterns of the

world. It is to convert it, not from the power of Satan unto God, but from one class of sins to another class of sins—from licentiousness to ambition, from profligacy to avarice, from the love of sinful pleasure to the love of a sinful world. The effect then plainly is to destroy a soul, and to bring down its blood upon its betrayer and murderer.

Such are the evils of lukewarmness. If any whom I now address are of that spirit, would to God that I could lead you into the very train of reflections into which I insensibly fell, while I was preparing this discourse. It was as follows:—

Whose cause, I asked myself, am I now about to plead? Is it the cause of God with his own creatures, the work of his own hands? And is his charge against them, the want of zeal, of true fidelity, of all that can be termed affection or attachment? And can they bear the cutting accusation of ingratitude, and of cold indifference to the source of all their blessings? Can they listen, without emotion, to a direct charge of disaffection to the King of Heaven; as if he were not, like earthly superiors, a real person, but an abstract notion, an empty name, a fleeting shadow, an infinite nothing? Is the root then of lukewarmness, I continued, after all, a disbelief of the very

fundamentals of religion? Is this deadness of the heart a lurking suspicion that there is no power above? a spirit which whispers, in the secret chambers of the soul, there is no God? Or cannot another reason be assigned? Earthly masters are hasty in resentment, and quick to punish. But God is slow to punish, and in the midst of provocations is long-suffering, mild, patient, and forgiving. Temporal majesty dresses out its brief authority in every sign and circumstance of power. But God veils the splendor and brightness of the uncreated essence, the terror and lightnings of his omnipotence, in clouds of soft compassion; in the gentle characters of a father's condescension, of more than a mother's tenderness. The truth is, if at this moment it were proclaimed, by a voice from heaven, that we had all been in error, and that God was in his nature inexorable and cruel, men would know how to respect and reverence him. The lukewarm would then burn with zeal; they would bow the knee in servile homage; they would think no sacrifice too costly, no pains too great, to flatter his caprice, or avert his anger. Yes—the case is clear:—it is because God is good, that he is neglected and unheeded. This is the reason why that all-gracious being is banished from men's hearts and minds and familiar con-

versations; why his benefits meet no kind returns, his blessings win no gratitude.

Such were the thoughts which presented themselves to my mind. And if these suggestions cannot reach the soul, and force a way, through every obstacle, to the seat of conscience, where, alas! shall we look for motives to rouse and animate the lukewarm breast? Yes, there is one consideration, which can act when every other fails, and which, to them that believe, is the power of God unto salvation:—I mean the sufferings and death of the Redeemer.

The sacrifice upon the cross, was the means ordained by heaven to satisfy the divine justice, to vindicate the divine law, and to clear a passage for God's mercy to this fallen world, without the compromise of his unchangeable righteousness and truth. But the *revelation* of that stupendous mystery, and its exhibition before the eyes of men, was manifestly intended to serve a purpose altogether of another nature.

It was not to soften the heart of God, it was to soften the heart of man, that the Scriptures have so circumstantially detailed all the hardships of the Saviour's life, and all the agonies of his death. It was not to draw forth pity from the divine bosom, or to call down the

compassion of God upon the sufferings of his beloved Son ; it was to win our affections, and to gain our hearts, that Christ is set forth in these unerring pages, as, emphatically, “ a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ;” as enduring all the extremities of a hard and afflicted lot, of distress, contempt, indignity, and pain. Yes, my brethren, read these records for yourselves: behold there and see, if “ any sorrow was like unto his sorrow.” The question then is, do you really believe that Christ has drunk to the dregs this cup of misery ? Do you believe that he bore all his pains and agonies for you ? Do you believe and acknowledge him to be your Saviour and your God ? What suitableness, then, is there in the measured movements of the lukewarm, to such inconceivable, overwhelming obligations ?

God claims, indeed, the affections of an undivided heart: but what has he not done to win our hearts ? What has he not condescended to, that he might gain our confidence and love ? What has he not suffered, which could disarm even enmity itself, and turn the heart of stone into a heart of flesh ?

If we still resist these motives—if we still despise God’s goodness, his last best means to lead us to repentance—we have then been brought fairly to the test ; the sovereign re-

medy has been tried, and it has failed ; we are weighed in the balance, and are found wanting, and will be lost for ever. And when the final doom of lukewarmness is sealed, how may God appeal to a wondering universe, and say, What means have I neglected to save these souls?—what could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? And how may the indignant murmur go round the countless myriads, and pass along all the ranks of the angelic host—“ Lo, these are the degenerate and apostate spirits, for whom God delivered up his Son, and for whom the Lord of Glory died; but they rejected that great salvation, and are now departing into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Upon that tremendous day, a far different generation will appear at Christ's right hand. In their Judge they will behold their Saviour, their Deliverer, and their Friend. The glad tidings of redeeming love had reached their ears in life—they had ears that heard, and hearts that understood. God's goodness had not been lost on them. Their affections were engaged, their hearts were won—their souls, and all the powers within them, became a willing sacrifice, and whole burnt offering unto God. Their salvation had begun on earth.

Eternity had dawned upon them. The love of God had opened paradise in their souls. Christ was their confidence in life, and at the hour of death. They now can trust him in the day of judgment; and wait in calm repose, and deep tranquillity of soul, to hear his final benediction—
 “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the
 “kingdom prepared for you from the foundation
 “of the world.”

SERMON II.

Psalm, xvi. 11.

IN THY PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY; AT THY RIGHT HAND
ARE PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE.

It has been observed, that our truest notions of heaven are derived from a consideration, rather of what it is not, than of what it is; rather of the evils it is free from, than of the good which is present there. How glorious a liberty will it be, for instance, to attain that part of the adoption of God's children, which St. Paul terms the redemption of our body! What a large proportion of mankind are doomed by their corporeal necessities to toilsome and incessant drudgery; rising up early, late taking rest, and eating the bread of carefulness, and, after all, pinched with want, depressed by poverty, without comforts for their children around them, toiling when their strength is almost gone, when their soul is fainting in them! Again, time would fail us to re-

count the long catalogue of sharp distempers and pains which beset this mortal body; the wearisome nights that heavy sickness brings; the humiliating and unsightly ailments which render us a terror to ourselves; the tortures which even remedies occasion, and which make men of nervous and sensitive constitutions, sometimes dread the surgeon's knife more than death itself.—Will it then be a small deliverance to be out of the reach of these? To find ourselves clothed with bodies pure, spiritual, incorruptible, subject to no languor, no heaviness, no pain? To be where there is no pining sickness, no withering old age? Where no poor shall ery for bread, where they shall neither thirst or hunger more?

Neither in heaven will there be any more dying. Here we live in the very region of death. The whole creation, irrational as well as rational, groaneth and travaileth in pain together, under the iron sceptre of this king of terrors. And surely, if life in every other respect yielded the purest happiness, it would be some abatement of it, to see the inferior animals all around, silently submissive to that curse which our sins have brought down upon them. Nor is it possible to survey the cattle upon a thousand hills, the sheep that ornament our fields, innoeent, defenceless, and unsuspecting, without some feeling for that allotment, by which they will all be summoned

from their pleasant pastures, to die by the hand of slaughter. Into this mysterious arrangement I do not presume to enter fully ; nor would I take upon me, with a late truly excellent minister of the gospel, to lay down as a positive doctrine, (cheering as the prospect may be) that these animals will rise again to a new and blessed life. But this I will say, because the Scripture says it, that the meanest of such creatures is the care of heaven ; that God feedeth the young ravens that call upon him ; that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Heavenly Father. In these hands we should be satisfied to leave them ; assured that they will be considerately and mercifully dealt with. One thing, however, is clear, that while they are the objects of such care, it is a more serious thing than some imagine to trifle with their pains ; to make their miseries our sport, or to put them to one moment's needless suffering. These sentiments, I am well aware, will pass with many for unmanly, childish weakness : but alas ! do we consider how much of that high mettle, which we call manliness, must come down ? Do we remember that we must become as little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven ? In that world, then, of angelic innocence, of divine simplicity, tenderness, and love, where he, who was himself once led as a lamb to the slaughter, sitteth upon the throne—it

will, I say, be a part of its blessedness, to feel assured that no creatures are doomed to suffer for our use; to look, around, perhaps, and see various orders of happy beings, who range its everlasting hills, and rejoice in security on every side; to see its vallies smile with flocks, against which no hand of violence shall be raised, and which shall repose upon their pastures during the days of an endless life.

But death comes closer to our own doors. We must die ourselves. And though it is the privilege of true believers to look with confidence, through him that loved them, beyond the grave; yet between them and the heavenly Canaan are interposed the swellings of Jordan, and the dark valley of the shadow of death. And however they may rejoice in hope of their inheritance, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, yet the last illness, the sinkings of the heart, the nerves in surprise and in alarm, the clouds which overhang the soul, and all the mysterious horrors of dissolving nature; these are formidable to flesh and blood. Nor is it a small thing to bid farewell to the light of the sun, and to the cheering face of nature; to scenes long-endear'd, and twined around our hearts by every soothing and every sacred association. Nor is it a light affliction to behold our weeping friends around us, and to disappoint all their anxieties and prayers

for our recovery: to let go the helm, and send forth the vessel, which contains our children and all our earthly treasures, without a pilot, upon the waves of this troublesome world. These are the sorrows and the deep waters of a dying hour. And though in the midst of these, comforts will refresh the Christian's soul; yet the best of all these comforts is, that he is passing to a world in which there is neither pain, nor tears, nor death, nor parting.

In heaven there will be no more sin. There the nations learn war no more. There no weapons of destruction are found. There no hand of oppression wrings sighs and tears from the poor, and him that has none to help him. Sin is the root of all our miseries. If sin were banished from the earth, this world would be comparatively a heaven. No legal securities or bonds, no bars or locks, would then be wanting. We could lie down in peace at night, and leave our doors wide open, and let the houseless wanderer in, and confide all that we possessed, our lives and fortunes, to the sure keeping of every stranger's conscience. We might throw all our treasures untold around us, and trust our neighbour, as we would the purity of an angel. We might then dismiss all anxieties for our children, and commit them in full repose of mind to the wide world, and bid them ask the way to heaven of

every casual passenger on the road of life. These would be bright and halcyon days—happy would be the people in such a case; yea, blessed the people who had the Lord for their God. But these days of innocence we shall never see on earth—these delightful visions will be realized alone in heaven.

Such are, if I may so speak, a few of the negative blessings of the future life: let us now consider what may be its positive sources of enjoyment.

The happiness of heaven is occasionally described to us in the word of God, under the most captivating forms of rural pleasure—those innocent delights which the pure in heart enjoy, in the calm retreats of country life, and amidst the soothing scenes of nature. The Scriptures tell us of its green pastures, its clear fountains, its rivers of pleasure, by which the Shepherd of Israel shall lead his chosen sheep and faithful followers. “To him that overcometh,” saith the Spirit to the churches, “will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” For my own part, when I sometimes walk in a garden, amidst fruits and flowers, and birds that sing amongst the branches, I fall as it were insensibly into the following train of meditation:—If man was what he once was—if the love of God glowed in every breast around

us—if this sweet tranquillity was, as in the primeval paradise, but the outward copy of that peace which reigned within man's soul—surely it would be good for us to be here ; we need no translation to another world to satisfy the fondest wish for happiness. But again, when I have had time to think of the corruption which overspreads this fallen world, and have remembered that all within my view was short-lived, frail, and perishing, and that winter was coming quickly round to wither and to desolate this peaceful scene :—I have then turned for relief to those Scripture promises which hold out to us, as it were, a renewal and restoration of these calm delights, in an unchangeable world—in that paradise where we shall walk in ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace, amidst trees whose fruits shall never decay, and whose flowers shall never fade ; where the seasons will know no change, and where summer will never end.

Sometimes the state of blessedness is likened to a city ; and its brilliancy and magnificence are described in terms of the most splendid sublimity. From the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Revelations, I shall select a few remarkable passages to this effect. “ Come,” said one of the angels in vision to St. John, “ and I “ will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And “ he carried me away, in the spirit, to a great and

“high mountain, and showed me that great city,
“the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven
“from God. And the street of the city was pure
“gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw
“no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty
“and the Lamb are the temple of it. And he
“showed me a pure river of water of life, pro-
“ceeding out of the throne of God and of the
“Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on
“either side of the river, was there the tree of
“life, which bare twelve manner of fruit, and
“yielded her fruit every month. And there
“shall be no night in that city—and they need
“no candle, neither light of the sun; for the
“Lord God giveth them light; and they shall
“reign for ever and ever.”

Such is the residence which God has prepared for his people. And there they will not pass each a solitary existence, but will form an united and happy society together. For in that city of the living God (we are told in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews) there dwell an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. In the Jerusalem above, all jarring interests, all selfish and discordant passions, are unknown. None but the sons of peace shall enter there. None shall strive or cry, neither shall

any one lift up his voice in the streets. Brethren shall dwell together in unity—all will be of one heart and of one soul. Nor will it be a small part of our happiness to see there, face to face, the illustrious dead, whose praise is recorded in the Scripture. Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles; all who have walked with God on earth, or suffered for the testimony of Jesus. To see there, perhaps, the man who by his writings converted us from the paths of sin; who by his example, or his faithful reproofs, plucked us as brands out of the burning. And amongst the multitudes, which no man can number, what joyful meetings, what blessed re-unions will there be, between those who were bound to one another in life as the friends of God, and fellow-soldiers of the cross—Between parents who had watched, and wept, and prayed over their children's souls, and children who had trod in those parents' steps, and followed their good example—Between all those, in a word, who, united in the faith of the Redeemer, were pleasant to each other in life, and in death were not divided. They shall hail one another on that happy shore; they shall call to mind the dangers and deliverances of life's tempestuous voyage, and adore together that merciful hand, which unseen had led them all by their allotted courses, to the land of everlasting life.

In that world where friends shall meet, it will

be the blessed privilege of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to meet that friend who sticketh closer than a brother. What the unspeakable happiness of this may be, can be estimated, however imperfectly, by those alone who really feel that sacred attachment; those who have believed the record that God gave of his Son, and who have laid hold upon him as their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption. These are the souls for whom it is reserved to behold in glory, a Master whom they have loved and served under the vail of his humiliation.—“Ye are they,” says our Lord to his Apostles, “which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Such promises seem to me to have a peculiar significance; the principle of which I shall endeavour to open out.

It is not in prosperity that we can best appreciate the fidelity of our friends. Many will flutter round the favourite of the world; but few will cleave to him when things are altered: few will sooth the pillow of his affliction when he is depressed, when he is low in spirits, in fortune, and in estimation. Few are those with whom the memory of a friend still lives, when the world has

ceased to take an interest in him, and when to visit him is to turn our feet aside from the beaten path of life. The child of sorrow has, however, at least this one advantage, he best can tell his real friends.

Thus to try the hearts of men in reference to God, and to put their affections to this kind of test, I do not scruple to say, the gospel has made an awful and mysterious provision. The King of Glory came down to visit us in great humility. He was despised and rejected of men. To the eye of popular feeling, he had no form or comeliness that we should desire him. We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. And as Christ was in the world, so has his religion always been. There are, I grant, effects and collateral benefits of Christianity, which render its name and forms respected. It inculcates obedience to the reigning powers; and giving sanctity to an oath, it lends authority to the laws; it subserves men's secular interests, and binds the links of civil society. But Christianity in its true nature—the hidden life which animates the believer's soul—the mind that was in Christ Jesus—the faith upon the Son of God, which overcomes the world, and looks upward to the heavens—this Christianity, like its Divine Author, is here, I say, a stranger in a strange land: it is foolishness to this world; and if it encounter not its

hostility, escapes only because it is beneath its notice, or invisible to its eyes. And yet this is the interest in which God has made himself a party; this is the cause which is identified with Christ himself; this is the religion to which his own emphatic words apply, with still more pointed force than to its first promulgators, "whoso despiseth you despiseth me."

Here then is the awful test to which God puts the hearts of men—the mysterious balance by which he weighs them, and by which he ascertains, shall I say, his real friends. He assumes the form of great humility, that, on the one hand, he may reach and draw forth that deep degeneracy which turns even from God himself, when placed for a moment on the suffering side; and that, on the other hand, he may exercise and crown that tried fidelity of soul, which when all things visible were against him, confessed an invisible and crucified Redeemer.

Who then can conceive and estimate that exceeding weight of joy with which this faithful flock shall hail their triumphant Shepherd, when he appears in glory! When the standard of the cross shall beam with insufferable brightness from all the towers and battlements of heaven! When the dead, small and great, shall stand before the Son of God; and when, from that awful judgment-seat, he shall look down with unutterable

love upon the humblest soul that was faithful to him in life, and from amidst the dazzling glories that surround him, shall say, "It is I; be not afraid—Fear not; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

There is, in the glory to be revealed, one step higher than Christ's sublimest exaltation in his mediatorial kingdom. It is what divines have called the beatific vision. The revelation of God as he is in himself—the Trinity unveiled and without a cloud; and seen as far as created intelligences can bear to look on the divine essence and live. But on this it is unprofitable for us to dwell: we have not faculties for so high a reach. Let us abstain from all presumptuous speculation; and rest in the thankful belief, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

My brethren, these realms of everlasting joy are not displayed in Scripture to tantalize you with forbidden fruit: they are the inheritance of every one of you, who will accept the mercies freely offered you.

Hopeless, indeed, would be our condition, if in our own strength we had to tread the upward path which leads to this blessed mansion; or pay down, as the price of our admission, the ten thousand talents which we owe to God. But the

Scriptures assure us, that the full price of our entrance into heaven is paid ; that our sins, tho' red like crimson, and as the sand on the sea shore innumerable, are expiated by the blood of Christ ; that entire forgiveness is purchased for the guilty and the lost ; that the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers ; that all may now come to the waters of salvation...may come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price. All that is required on our part, is to repent and believe the Gospel ; to come unto him who is the way, the truth, and the life ; to own, and to receive him as our great deliverer, from both the power, and punishment of sin.

The Gospel must be received in all its fulness ; and none can with consistence claim its future pardon, unless they earnestly desire to find it now, the power of God unto salvation. If we do not hunger, and thirst after righteousness ; if we do not love righteousness for its own sake, and press for the attainment of every virtue, as its own reward ; what can our hopes or anticipations of heaven be, but the creatures of mere delusion ? Nay, if dissevered from the true relish of purity and goodness, let us take care that our longing after another life, be not the child of discontent, the secret working of a subtle unmortified ambition. For whatever the outward glories of eternity may be, the life of heaven is in the soul

itself. It must be fitted for the calm delights, and suited to the spiritual enjoyments of the state of blessedness, or it is self-evident that it cannot be happy. For happiness essentially consists in the fruition of what we love. No being can feel happy, in an uncongenial, and hostile element. As soon then could the pillars of heaven give way; as soon could darkness issue from the sun, or defilement from the bosom of God; as could the man who lives and dies in sin, and in the friendship of this present world, pass through the grave and gate of death, to a joyful resurrection. Death will not change the character of the soul. Judge then the matter for yourselves. Could foul debauchery feel happy in scenes of angelic innocence, of high unconquerable virtue, which no hellish impurity could seduce? or could pride feel happy where all are dead to self, where all are poor in spirit, and ascribe praise, and honor, and glory, to God alone?

It is in this view that the Scriptures insist with so much force on the necessity of conversion—of a radical change from our natural corruption; from that deadness to God, and the heavenly life, in which we are all conceived and born. Nor is this transformation a mere arbitrary appointment; it is an unalterable necessity; grounded in the nature and constitution of things.

When, therefore, as your appointed ministers,

we beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God; and to renounce in heart and mind a world that lieth in wickedness—its mad ambition, its deceitful pleasures, its ruinous delusions; we do so, because we feel that we are pleading with you for your life. We know that those who strive to compromise between the world and God, are trifling with themselves, and will reap unmingled misery in the end. They will find at last, that they were grasping at two shadows—that the world was a shadow; that their religion was a shadow; and that between these shadows they have thrown away the substance; they have lost heaven, and lost their souls.

If this would appear to any of you the language of severity, pause a moment, and consider what this language means. You must be holy here, if you would be happy hereafter. But what does this amount to? It is in other words to say, that God has offered you an endless heaven, and requires as the preparation for it, that this heaven should begin on earth. Is this then a hard allotment, or a severe condition?

If any of you, my brethren, could call it so, let me ask you in conclusion, whether you are happy in the ways you are now pursuing? Are you solidly contented? Have your hopes been realized? Is your bosom the seat of deep tranquillity? Ask yourselves these questions in the

retirement of your closets; when you are alone; when no eye but God's can see you; when you think upon the days that are past, and upon the prospects that lie before. And oh! if in these solemn investigations, you find your spirits sink, your bosoms heave, and your hearts misgive you; if you hear the often unheeded voice of conscience whisper in the secret recesses of your souls, that this is not happiness, or the way to happiness; may these moments of solemn reflection be blessed and sanctified; may your sorrow be turned into joy; may you lay hold on the mercies of the Gospel; may you turn to him, through whom alone we have access unto the Father; may you seek and find that happiness in God, which God alone can give. .

SERMON III.

Ecclesiastes vii. 13, 14.

“CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD: FOR WHO CAN MAKE THAT STRAIGHT WHICH HE HATH MADE CROOKED? IN THE DAY OF PROSPERITY BE JOYFUL, BUT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER: GOD ALSO HATH SET THE ONE AGAINST THE OTHER, TO THE END THAT MAN SHOULD FIND NOTHING AFTER HIM.”

THE writings of Solomon, are an invaluable depository of divine truth—and have, ever since they were penned, afforded salutary counsel to the Church of God. They display in glowing colours the littleness of man, and the majesty of Jehovah; the vanity of all earthly things, and the inestimable worth of “the wisdom that is from above;” the folly which marks the pursuits of human beings, sunk by sin into a low state of degradation, and the unsearchableness of the judgments of him who “ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will”—and “giveth not ac-

count of any of his matters." Job xxxiii. 13. In these writings we have not only the language of inspiration upon the subjects referred to, but that language uttered by a man who "*saw all the works that are done under the sun,*" 1. 14, and has left the result of his experience upon record in those memorable words, which the thoughtless and profane would do well to consider: "*behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*" 1. 14. If this world were capable of affording peace and happiness to the restless and unsatisfied mind of man, Solomon would have enjoyed these blessings, when he "*kept not from his eyes whatsoever they desired,*" and "*withheld not his heart from any joy,*" 1. 10.—But the world was to him, what it must ever be to all who place their hopes upon it, a "*broken cistern*"—a well without water—a cloud without rain. God said to man, when by a glaring act of disobedience he threw off that mild restraint, which was destined to be a test of his love and an earnest of his security, "*cursed is the ground for thy sake*"—but is the curse confined to the ground? Is it only in the thorns and thistles which grow out of the earth when left without culture, that we can behold the blast of the Lord's displeasure? Our contemplation may take a far wider range, and entering into the recesses of man's heart,

survey the miseries of fallen nature, in its complete alienation from God, and in the tyranny exercised by sin over every feeling of it. The curse has extended there also, the love of God has been supplanted by the love of self; the soul which will exist through all eternity, and is capable of being "*filled with all the fullness of God*," Eph. iii. 19—has its desires chained to earth and bounded by time—so that we can readily trace the accuracy of the description given in the 9th ch. 3 v. "*the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*"

We ought not to be surprised, that a being possessing an heart which is *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, should forget the end of his existence—should sport upon the brink of destruction—should pervert the blessings of Providence, and make light of the blessings of grace—should with a strange infatuation, make both prosperity and adversity minister to his misery, and should hope to improve his condition either by endeavouring to prove that there is no God, or that he does not exercise a control over the minor works of creation. There are not in nature two things more different, than true wisdom and its counterfeit: the one puffs up; the other humbles;

the one is guided by worldly motives, the other by the solemn declarations of the Holy Scriptures; the one increases sorrow, the other invariably produces happiness; the one common to all intelligent creatures, the other a distinguishing trait in the character of those who are taught of God, and therefore, made "*wise unto salvation.*" This wisdom which *the Lord possessed from everlasting, from the beginning*—Prov. viii. 22, 23—and which is represented to be *the wisdom of the just*, is that which you, my brethren, ought to be most anxious to possess, for without it you cannot know the path of duty in which you ought to walk; nor the motives by which you ought to be influenced in the performance of that duty; nor the multiplied encouragements you have, to face a frowning world, which is ever anxious to strew thorns upon the narrow path that leadeth unto life; nor the blessedness that is to be found in receiving the testimony of Jesus Christ; and in resolving the various trials, changes, and allotments of life, into the will of the sovereign and all-wise disposer of events, whose name is *Love*.

A wise and understanding heart is a blessing of no ordinary value, but one which excites very little interest in the world; business, sensual pleasures, and cares, are the thorns which

choke the word and render it unfruitful: by them the minds of men are distracted, led in captivity, and eventually made miserable, so that it becomes indispensably necessary to rouse them from their stupor, to call them in from their wanderings, that they may consider their latter end and prepare to meet God. The preaching of the Gospel is the appointed means for effecting this important object: and we are told in the volume of inspiration, that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* Rom. x. 17. This weapon, so insignificant in the estimation of the world, is *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,* 2 Cor. x. 4; and has been found effectual in bringing liberty to the captive, and comfort to the mourning soul; but like every other blessing, it is abused by the depraved, unthankful mind of man; and as he can with perfect unconcern behold the sun which shines upon him every day, and prevents the earth from being a dreary waste: so he can hear with still greater unconcern of the bright rising of the sun of righteousness, who alone is able to chase away mental darkness, and to make the "desert rejoice and blossom as the rose." Human events are ordered in a wise subservience to the accomplishment of God's purposes; and they are often employed as

revolve a little more, they become discernible, and excite at the same time our gratitude and admiration. How often have we anticipated evil which has never befallen us, and received blessings which we never calculated upon? Again, how often when waiting with an anxious mind for a trial of one description, have we been forced to grapple with another, as severe as it was unexpected? All these things unite in shewing, that the work of the Lord as it refers to whatever befalls us, is a subject exceedingly profitable in itself, and deserves the attention of persons in every rank of life.

This leads me secondly, to shew the impossibility of altering or defeating the purposes of God. To prove this, might I not refer to the experience and observation of all people? When disease attacks the human frame, although it may be gentle in its first approach, and gradual in its future progress; yet, if it be commissioned by the great Arbiter of life and death to separate body and soul; how soon does the frail fabric crumble into dust, notwithstanding all the exertions of kindness and skill. On the other hand, the most acute pain and the most virulent contagion are alike harmless in their final results, if the Lord determine, as in the case of Heze-

kiah, to lengthen life. Our fields may be cultivated with all imaginable care—we may sow the best corn that can be procured—but if the will of the Lord be so, we can reap nothing but disappointment. If he designs to chastise a guilty people by sending a famine upon them, he can make a worm, or a dew, hail, storm, or lightning, to blast man's hope in a moment, and to teach him that *except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it, and that except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* Psalm cxxvii. 1. If it be his will, to fill a sinner with remorse of conscience, he can make him cry out with Cain *my punishment is greater than I can bear*—or with Joseph's brethren, when they imagined that vengeance was about to overtake them, *we are verily guilty concerning our brother*—or with Judas, *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.* All hearts are in his hand; his power rules over all; none can stay that hand or resist successfully that power. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? Whether it be done against a nation or a man only*—Job. xxxiv. 29. Who could have imagined that the cruelty exercised towards Joseph by his brethren, which was manifested by his captivity, sale, and banishment, would

have led to the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.* Gen. xxii. 17. This one instance is sufficient to prove to us, that there is an overruling Providence; that the very events which seem to happen fortuitously, or are brought about by the craft, the wrath, or the unbelief of man, are made to praise the Lord, by becoming instrumental to the accomplishment of his most gracious purposes of love and mercy. If the book of Providence were studied, faith would be more strengthened, and the mind would have a livelier apprehension of the mysterious ways in which God often moves, and be taught the impropriety of judging him by feeble sense. If this book be read with diligence by him who is acquainted with the word of life, and instructed by the Holy Spirit, he cannot fail to join with all the cordiality, and affection of a believing mind, in that majestic ascription of praise which is contained in 1 Chron. xxix. 11-12.—*Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come out of thee, and thou reignest over*

all ; and thine is the power and might ; and in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now, therefore, O God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But the brightest display of infinite wisdom, love, power, and providential arrangement, is made in the wondrous plan devised for the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ—of this I shall speak, now that I come to state,

Thirdly—The duty incumbent on man to be satisfied with his lot. A sinner by nature and practice, man deserves no blessing from his Maker—he can lay no claim to a continuance of present mercies, nor has he in himself any ground to hope for fresh ones—of course every thing he enjoys is unmerited ; it is the free gift of God, and whatever his hand bestows, it can in a moment take away. Is it for such a being as this to be dissatisfied with what he possesses, because others possess more ? Is it for him to compare his mercies with his supposed merits, and to maintain that the former are outnumbered by the latter ? Is it for him to envy the health, or riches, or honours, or ease, which others enjoy ? Is it for him to think that he is hardly dealt with, while oppressed by pain, sickness, hunger, or thirst—when a moment's reflection ought to convince him that any thing short of hell is a

~~nothing~~ * ~~Besides this~~ we are apt to make
 a ~~false estimate~~ of the ~~requirements~~ of others ; we
 judge ~~from outward appearances~~, and these
 are ~~very~~ ~~often~~ ~~extremely~~ ~~deceitful~~. Could
 we ~~lift up~~ ~~back~~ ~~the curtain~~, and see the actual
 condition of those whose situation is perhaps
 envied, we ~~might~~ ~~probably~~ see just cause why
 we should be ~~satisfied~~ ~~with our own~~. Naaman,
 captain of the host of the king of Syria, was
 a ~~great man~~ ~~with his master~~ ~~and~~ ~~honourable~~, but
 he was a ~~leper~~—and the situation of the little
 man who ~~stood~~ ~~near~~ ~~his~~ wife was preferable
 to his. 2 Kings v. 1-3-5. Haman had abundance
 of riches and a multitude of children : he was
 advanced above the princes and servants of
 the king—but there was a crook in his lot
 also—and with a ~~safer~~ ~~magnanimity~~ he declared,
as this troubled me nothing, so long as I see
Mordecai the Jew, sitting at the king's gate.
 Esther v. 13. Read the history of the various
 families mentioned in the Scriptures, and you
 will find that all the art and power of man
 were unable to make that straight, which the
 Lord hath made crooked—and if the condition
 of all your families were laid open to public
 view, how much misery would appear, where
 at present nothing can be seen but comfort ?
 When all are receiving the very opposite to
 what they deserve, surely the voice of mur-

muring ought to be hushed—and we ought from a sense of the loving kindness of the Lord, to put to ourselves this question, *wherefore doth a living man complain—a man for the punishment of his sins?* Lam. iii. 39. Life is a great blessing, although it may be accompanied by many anxious cares and oppressive afflictions: it is during life that the preached Gospel is heard; that the sinner is made acquainted with the wages of iniquity, and is instructed to seek deliverance out of the hands of his enemies; that he is to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; that he is to entertain the hope which will be realized in the eternal world. In this view of it, Hezekiah cried out, when the Lord added to his days, *the living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day.* Is. xxxviii. 19. What would those give for life, who were deprived of it and happiness together? Who are now shut out not only from the Sun in the natural, but also from the Sun of Righteousness in the spiritual firmament. Who are now complaining with cause, as they had often complained without it, and are smarting under a rod inconceivably more severe than any with which they were ever scourged before. Every condition of life has its peculiar trials—but those have most abundant cause of thankfulness,

who can from their heart join in Agur's prayer, and say, *remove from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me : lest I be full, and deny thee and say, who is the Lord? and lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Prov. xxx. 8-9. But who are they that can offer up this prayer in sincerity and truth? Who are they that are so delivered from inordinate desires as to be content with what they have, and to wish for no more? Are we to search for them among the gay, the dissipated, the profligate, the wasteful, or the avaricious? No, by no means; the cry of the horse leech *give, give*, is the cry of their hearts—they are never satisfied, and therefore never happy. They who offer up this prayer in sincerity, are taught by an heavenly instructor, that *man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*, Mat. iv. 4—that *man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*, Luke xii. 15—and that *godliness with contentment is great gain*, 1 Tim. vi. 6. 'Tis like striving against an overwhelming tide, to think of reconciling ourselves to our afflictions by the mere exertion of our own powers; we may bear them with the sullenness of a philosopher, but not with the meekness and patience

of a Christian. The heart must be changed by the grace of God before it can *rejoice in tribulation*—and testify *that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope*: and it is through the belief of the Gospel that this change is effected. He only who made the heart, can *create it anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works*; and it is the peculiar character of the Gospel, that which distinguishes it essentially from every thing bearing the name of revelation; that it not only presents to us the clearest and most instructive doctrines, the mildest precepts, and the most encouraging promises, but that it is in reality *the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*. The Gospel points out to man a refuge from the storms of Divine wrath—and an hope in the midst of all the terrors which sin has cast around his guilty soul, by announcing to him that an herald of mercy has winged his way from the courts of Heaven, to undertake his restoration to the favour of God—to make the atonement which was necessary in order to effect it, and to become the new and living way in which he is to walk through all the cares and turmoils of life, to his heavenly and eternal rest.

The Gospel declares, that this herald of

mercy is none other than one of the persons of the ever blessed Trinity, who having taken into the Godhead the human nature without any of its defilements, has paid the full price of redemption, by satisfying to the uttermost every demand which the law or justice of God might require, and is set forth as the only propitiation for sin. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord ; that life is only the continuance of the new life, which is imparted to the heirs of salvation, and is *hid with Christ in God*—and both are the sure results of believing in his perfect atonement. God commendeth his love towards sinners, not by lessening the demands of his law ; not by bringing in a milder one ; not by accepting real or supposed sincerity in the room of required obedience, but by giving his son to die for them, that they being justified by his blood, might be saved from wrath through him. Out of his fulness they receive and grace for grace—therefore, they are “patient in tribulation”—therefore, they “walk circumspectly”—therefore, they stand undismayed in the midst of “the fiery darts of the wicked,” which fly thick around them—therefore, “they hold fast the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end”—and when others are ready to sink into despair at the prospect of leaving the

scene of all their enjoyments, they “rejoice in hope of the glory of God”—they wait for the coming of their Lord—they “long to depart and to be with Christ.” They are, indeed, a peculiar people, and “it becometh them to be thankful”—they possess a joy which a stranger intermeddleth not with; but as its origin is heavenly, so is its influence, and all who possess it are made independent of the precarious and vapid pleasures of a world that lieth in wickedness. It is their high privilege to see the hand of God in all his gifts and allotments—and whilst in prosperity they rejoice with trembling, they are prevented in adversity from indulging a murmuring spirit. They and they only can enter into the meaning and feel the force of the exhortation, “in the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider.”

Consideration is an important and plainly enjoined duty—and when we take into account the character of man, and the distractions produced in his mind by visible things, its necessity is quite apparent. He “walketh in a vain shadow and disquieteth himself in vain”—he is like a troubled sea, and rest here, as well as hereafter, is one of the many blessings promised by our Saviour to those who come to him. If man looks forward in his

unrenewed state, it is either to anticipate evils, the very apprehension of which makes him miserable—or to indulge the speculations of an unbelieving mind, whilst God is forgotten and eternity kept out of view. He considers not the end, and therefore he does amiss.—How merciful then is the voice which says to him, “consider your ways and be wise”—how friendly is the hand which leads him into the wide field of providential dispensations, and at the same time points to the Scriptures which contain the revealed will of God, and consequently, the only clue by which any of his secret things can be made plain, or any intricacy unravelled!

In consideration the mind is carried off from itself, and is engaged about things, which for the present, at least, are deemed important; but unless it be supremely directed to the Father of Lights, and influenced by his Spirit, it will produce no salutary effect. Indeed, in no state, and under no circumstances, can the soul derive profit independent of God. Let us then, when engaged in the duty which the text enjoins, manifest a spirit of humility, constancy, prayer, and faith. Our ignorance, perverseness, and depravity, should humble us to the dust. Our helplessness, timidity, and inordinate love of the world, should teach us

a lesson of constancy. Our innumerable wants daily recurring and multiplying, call us to be "instant in prayer," to "pray without ceasing," and our condition as fallen creatures who so far from being able to atone for sin, or to rise by our natural strength above its temptations, or to perform duty in an acceptable manner, are unable to make one hair white or black, to add to our stature one cubit, or to look for a moment beyond the present one—convincingly proclaims the necessity of faith as an ingredient without which consideration can never be really profitable. If there be one season more suited than another for the exercise of this Christian duty, it is the season of adversity—then the false lights of this world in a great measure disappear—then its comforts decline—then instability appears stamped upon all human possessions—and then the eye of the mind, if opened by the Spirit's sacred influence, beholds the faithfulness and love of Jehovah arrayed in all their glory, and are found to possess an attractive power which draws it away from the painful contemplation of sorrow and sin, and causes it to look forward to that brighter scene which is presented above, where there is nothing chequered, nothing imperfect, and where sighing, sorrow, and pain, will have no place.

Let us then consider that we are not called upon to account for the Lord's dealings, or to make the vain attempt of reconciling the seeming contrarieties in the Divine administration. If clouds and darkness are round about him—we may yet be sure that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. His servants will one day understand, as far as is necessary, every thing which now appears dark and perplexing, and in the mean season they are called to live by faith—to “take no thought for the morrow”—to “commit their ways unto him”—and to be satisfied with the assurance that “the judge of all the earth does right.” When, therefore, we see one thing set against another—when we see the rapid and in many instances, the unaccountable changes which take place in nature, in the concerns of nations, in the state of the church, and in the condition of individuals; let us rely upon the power which we are unable successfully to resist; let us submit to the infinitely wise arrangements of a Providence which we cannot controul; let us “be still, and know that he is God.” By all our “searching we can never find him out,” for his wisdom is infinite, and the depths of that wisdom, as it appears in the stupendous work of redemption, which is a source of un-

ceasing wonder to the angels that are before the throne; lie not more beyond our reach than do the formation and properties of the various animals that roam over our fields, or the flowers which beautify our gardens. As therefore, we can find nothing after God, nothing to censure, nothing to amend; and as it is out of our power to shed light upon any thing that he has involved in obscurity, let us learn to "trust him at all times," to "pour out our hearts before him," and to form our estimate of his dealings not "by feeble sense," but by the faithful testimony of his written word. Thus, having peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall live in hope of eternal life—and after our last conflict and victory enter into the kingdom of ineffable glory, where "we shall see as we are seen, and know even as we are known."

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.



SERMON IV.

John xvi. 7.

“NEVERTHELESS I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT IS EXPEDIENT FOR YOU THAT I GO AWAY, FOR IF I GO NOT AWAY THE COMFORTER WILL NOT COME UNTO YOU, BUT IF I DEPART I WILL SEND HIM UNTO YOU.”

AMONG the first followers of the Lord Jesus, the power of the Holy Ghost was shown forth after a two-fold manner. His blessed influence was felt, as it now is, in the heart, and through Him also divers miracles were wrought by the early disciples. These were extraordinary gifts, which are at present unknown among any description of believers. The reason of the natural order of things being put out of course is explained by our Lord himself, he says, “Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.” At the beginning of the new dispensation circumstances required this double testimony, which spoke both to outward and inward sense. It was

impossible to convince ignorant men by argument only; nor indeed would reasoning, without the evidence of God's own authority to the facts from which they reasoned, have ever sufficed to establish the necessity of complying fully with the Apostle's doctrine. Christians also at that period were under persecution, and, hence, the first promulgators of the new covenant had not the opportunity of holding those frequent discussions with the same individuals, which must be necessary when conviction is brought about through the mind only.

It was requisite, therefore, that by some authority, plainly from Heaven, the Apostles should show that without doubt the finger of God was with them. Thus, they were able at once to convince the beholders that their words ought to be attended to, when they declared the glad tidings of the Gospel, wonderful and inexplicable as that Gospel might appear. But once these truths were established by the testimony of miraculous gifts, through the power of the Holy Ghost, there was no longer any necessity for continuing this kind of supernatural evidence.

The inspired writings inform each successive generation, who will attend to them, as to those things whereof the Primitive Church was

firmly assured ; and, we at this day, through the narration so handed down, are as certain of the power of the Spirit, as if we had seen Ananias expire because he lied to the Holy Ghost, or witnessed the revival of the young man whom Paul restored, when falling from the third loft he was taken up dead. However, though the extraordinary and outward gifts of the Spirit have been for ages withdrawn, his ordinary and inward influence is promised to the comfort of every sincere Christian now in the world, aye or that shall be, till the second coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead—nor are those of former days to be considered as at all more blessed, because more gifted than the disciple of the present time. Our Saviour took care to correct such an erroneous opinion upon the very first communication of these unusual powers. The seventy, whom during his life time he sent forth to baptize, returned rejoicing, and said, “ Lord even the evil spirits are “ subject to us through thy name,” but his answer was, “ rejoice not in this, that the “ spirits are subject to you, but rejoice rather “ that your names are written in Heaven.” ’Tis in such a point of view that indeed we have a Comforter, who may abide with us for ever. But let none deceive themselves ; God

has promised the continuance of his aid only to those who acknowledge their need of it, and who strive after it. "Ask, and ye shall receive—seek, and ye shall find—knock, and it shall be opened unto you," are the words of his invitation. The blessing is not to be retained nor increased without proof of sincerity on our part, and this proof is to be given by watchfulness and prayer. Not watchfulness to gain the approbation of our fellows only, but spiritual watchfulness, "for God is a Spirit, and those that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, that "we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In the things belonging to the hidden recesses of the heart, we must look to the book, which shows men how to see more than meets the outward eye. 'Tis through the help of the Holy Spirit teaching us by the Bible, the right view of things, that we become among the number of those, to whom Christ alludes, when he says, "the world see me no more, but ye see me." The help of the Holy Spirit will never be refused to any persons whatever, if sought in a godly way. Our

Lord's blessed words are "if ye being evil, know how to give your children good gifts, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." All, therefore, who by a lively and a steady faith contemplate their Saviour, may be said to enjoy the assurance of that blessed declaration, "because I live ye shall live also." But the kind of belief required by our Lord, is not simply an acknowledgment that he is true, the Devils so "believe and tremble." Christ himself explains what he requires, and to what description of faith his gracious promises are made—"he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me," (not he that only knoweth me) but "he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." The manner in which he would manifest himself, the way in which he would make himself known to the heart, is what our Saviour likewise vouchsafed to treat of. He announces that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in his name, should teach his disciples all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatever he had said. Our Saviour certainly here spoke more particularly of the Apostles and the in-

spired writers, yet there is a sense in which the promise belongs to all Christians—for why were these writers inspired, except that we should be partakers of their hope. “None,” saith St. Paul, “can call Jesus the Lord but “by the spirit of God.” “It is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The aid therefore, and assistance of the Spirit to influence the heart is necessary for all, and is promised to all descriptions of the faithful. We find this doctrine inculcated by our ritual throughout from first to last. In the very rudiments of Christianity, after having repeated the ten commandments, the child is taught, “know this my good child, “that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and serve him, without his special grace, which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer.” And the Priest, set apart for the ministration of all that is awful in the holy offices, when he takes the vows of God upon him, he promises to fulfil them by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, “The Lord being his helper.” There is no part of Christian duty, however, less attended to than prayer for the Holy Spirit. Alas! many, were they to speak the truth as to what they conceive of the Holy Spirit, would

almost answer like those we read of in the Acts, who replied to Paul's question of whether they had received the Holy Ghost, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Are they but few in this Christian country, who consider little, who, may be, never yet have thought, what the Holy Ghost has to do with their own particular souls? Perhaps some such persons are even now amongst us—bear with me, brethren, it is not the whole that need a Physician but the sick—if any here present would like to ask, what am I to look for when I pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit? The answer is shortly this—He will lead you into all truth, but you must follow Him and not grieve the Holy Spirit; He will be your Comforter, but you must entirely rely on him.

If you pray for the aid of the Spirit of God, shaping your conduct in all humility, so as to prove that these prayers are not mere lip service, but the desire of the heart, then sooner or later as Heaven sees fit, that prayer shall have a good answer; you will become more and more persuaded towards all that is Christian in thought, word, and deed, and you will have a hidden satisfaction from it that the world cannot give. However, even among the better instructed, some there are impatient

in this matter, because they do not feel immediately the consolation promised, they despair of its ever coming, and so they grow weary in their petitions, though the delay may have been intended as an exercise of their faith, or the continuance of their trouble, meant to work wholesomely towards establishing them in the right way, by leading them to repeated supplication. Such hasty conduct as this, is in fact to contradict God, unlike that word which says, "Let God be true and every man a liar." All parts of the Scripture inculcate the duty of waiting upon God, and talk of a perseverance almost to the length of holy violence in our petitions. Our Lord puts forth a parable, in which he says, "an unrighteous judge that feared neither God nor man heard a suppliant because of her perpetual crying," how much more will the Author of all righteousness be moved with the request of him that fainteth not.

There is another species of discouragement which is sometimes found to influence a different description of persons—they are disappointed when they find no sudden change in themselves, as the consequence of their petitions. Did they attend to what the Scripture says, nothing of this sudden kind would be expected, as to the inward things of the Spirit,

all may be going on without any marked crisis. Our Lord has told us, "the kingdom of God is within you." He compares it to the progress of a little leaven which by due degrees leavened the whole lump; he likens it to the grain of mustard, which, though the smallest of all seeds, grows to be the greatest of herbs; he gives for another simile, the husbandman who commits the grain to the ground, having done what his own labour could do, and looking for the rest in due time to God the author and finisher of all. Such comparisons as these afford no warrant for the expectation of any sudden effect from the operation of the Spirit. Pious minds will therefore, do well not to grieve, as those almost without hope, because they have not felt any thing like an inward miracle; such feelings after all, instead of being divine impressions, are often but the occasional excitement of the bodily nerves; their truth can be ascertained in no other way than by their genuine effects, which must require time for their development. The first advice is, "in your patience possess ye your souls," and truly the very power to be patient, is a more satisfactory proof of the holy influence than almost any thing else. We have farther the example of an Apostle to prove that God will sometimes deny other gifts, because the

grace he has already vouchsafed is enough. These reflections may be useful to those who do pray, and yet do not receive the kind of assurance they expected at God's hand.

By far the greater number of persons, however, who neglect to seek the Spirit of God, are influenced by totally different views. They seek their salvation in another way; they think they are able enough without help to do good; they look upon some of their actions as in themselves sufficiently excellent to be approved of by God. In their virtues they depend on their own strength to carry them through, and 'tis only when they fail, that they look to the merits of the Saviour. There cannot be a more unchristian principle. For it at once lowers the honour of God, and raises the pride of man. All our acceptance is in the Beloved, and in nothing less. It is true, that Christ takes upon himself the transgressions committed through the unavoidable weakness of our nature, and even our tresspasses if through faith they be sincerely repented of. But it is not true of transgressions, that they were unavoidable, when we have neglected to seek and use the means of help that God has given against them. Would any one be thought to have done his best to put out a fire who had never called for assistance to extinguish the flame? or can that man be said to

have done his utmost against the power of sin, who has not asked often and fervently in prayer for the Holy Spirit, and thus sought that aid whereby he might quench the fiery darts of inward and outward wickedness?

Men pray for the help of God where their daily bread is concerned. They pray to Christ to forgive them the crimes they have committed, but they do not pray with half so much desire to have subdued in themselves the seeds of crime, to "be converted, that their sins may be blotted out." They rejoice to have the punishment done away, which they know was deserved by their iniquitous acts, but they do not go the full length of making a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness. They are content without seeking to have their thoughts made godly, which is the particular office of the Holy Spirit, as is declared in the daily service of our Church. The Priest says, "O Lord, make clean our hearts within us," the people answer, "and take not thy Holy Spirit from us." Yet, what are the numbers who never think at all whether he rules in their hearts or no? Nor do they pause to consider how they can invite him into their hearts. It is a great mistake to think that we need the aid of the Holy Spirit only in trials, in difficulties and in temp-

tations, or that we need pray to God for no cleansing but from our faults. The best that man can do is lamentably imperfect, and requires the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, to make it acceptable by Jesus Christ. Without him, the Prophet by the word of God assures us, that, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The history of the first Gentile convert may clearly be a proof of it. Cornelius was a just man; he was frequent in prayer; he took care that his household should be pious; he gave much alms to the poor; if this was enough, this he had done. But what followed? God in mercy, for his sincerity sent an Angel to tell him where he might learn more, might learn the sanctification that is in Christ Jesus, and so make his good deeds what they should be, the offspring of a lively faith, as flowing from a heart religiously instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and religiously inclined in the faith of Christ, which in Scripture language is called a heart renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

With respect to other men, we can only judge of them by their actions, where we are called upon to judge, which is not often. But with respect to ourselves, we can go a step farther, we can examine not only what we do, but why we do it—whether the thought of

God has had any share in it ; which, worldly prudence, or a care for the soul has influenced the mind and action ? Whether we give all the glory to our Master, or wish to appropriate part to ourselves ? For instance, when doing any duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us, we may satisfy our fellow-men, and gain their approbation, but if we neglect to thank God for giving the ability, or fail in asking him to pardon the imperfections, and to accept the humble endeavour as proof of faith, and so of trust in the Saviour, rather than in human righteousness ; how can any one who thus leaves his God out of the question, even in his good works ; how can such a person say, that he is doing every thing heartily, as unto the Lord, and not rather seeking with eye service to please men ? There plainly may be a great and deserved difference between two persons who in outward actions are perhaps the same. The one by the help of the Holy Spirit in secret thinks ever upon God, and he who seeth in secret will at the last reward his faithful stewardship openly. The other does not think of praying for the same help, his mind, therefore, is not under the same good influence of an equal sense of dependance. The consequence of which must be, that he will not

receive the same reward at the last day. In this sentence is strictly according to justice, since the praise from men, which may follow as the result of kind actions to them, not make us guilty of robbery towards God, should the voice of humble devotion not forward the glory on to him, "for what hast thou, "O man, which thou hast not received."

We could wish in all plainness of speech to open your minds to the necessity there is in prayer, the subject of which should distinctly be, that the grace of the Holy Spirit may be granted to each one of us, and lead our hearts according to the truth.

If to any, this seems a subject hard to be understood, or one that they have not considered heretofore as to its real importance, let them pray on their return home, and ask for that in which they have been so long wanting—feel now the reason for such prayer. Who does not think it would be a delight to see our Saviour as he was upon earth? to hear his gracious words, to mark all his doings for a pattern; yet, so much greater is the advantage of being taught inwardly by the Spirit of God, rather than through means of the outward senses only, that our Lord himself says, it was expedient for us he should go away, for adds he, "if I go not away, the Comforter,"

that is the Holy Spirit, "will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." When Christ declares, to continue his earthly presence was not so great a gift as to send the Holy Spirit, in what state must that man's heart be, who professes that he troubles not himself about the Holy Spirit? Can there be a stronger instance of how proud and hard the human heart will grow, when it does not humble itself to ask for Divine assistance from above.

Hitherto, what has been said relates to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon man, as each soul stands separately in need of his assistance. But there is another office belonging to him—one not so personal, yet which brings his power home to our tenderest sensibilities; which must fill every feeling mind with the most affecting awe. 'Tis his promise to guide us in our prayers for others. The Spirit is then said to make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. No commandment is given more positively, or more frequently, than that we should pray for one another. There are many instances in Holy Writ of the wrath of God being turned away, in answer to the petitions, which his true servants offered up for others. St. James assures us that, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man

receive the same reward at the last day. And this sentence is strictly according to justice, since the praise from men, which may follow as the result of kind actions to them, must make us guilty of robbery towards God, should the voice of humble devotion not forward the glory on to him, "for what hast thou, "O man, which thou hast not received."

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If to any, this seems a subject hard to be understood, or one that they have not considered heretofore as to its real importance, let them pray on their return home, and ask for that in which they have been so long wanting—feel now the reason for such prayer. Who does not think it would be a delight to see our Saviour as he was upon earth? to hear his gracious words, to mark all his doings for a pattern; yet, so much greater is the advantage of being taught inwardly by the Spirit of God, rather than through means of the outward senses only, that our Lord himself says, it was expedient for us he should go away, for adds he, "if I go not away, the Comforter,"

that is the Holy Spirit, "will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." When Christ declares, to continue his earthly presence was not so great a gift as to send the Holy Spirit, in what state must that man's heart be, who professes that he troubles not himself about the Holy Spirit? Can there be a stronger instance of how proud and hard the human heart will grow, when it does not humble itself to ask for Divine assistance from above.

Hitherto, what has been said relates to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon man, as each soul stands separately in need of his assistance. But there is another office belonging to him—one not so personal, yet which brings his power home to our tenderest sensibilities; which must fill every feeling mind with the most affecting awe. 'Tis his promise to guide us in our prayers for others. The Spirit is then said to make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. No commandment is given more positively, or more frequently, than that we should pray for one another. There are many instances in Holy Writ of the wrath of God being turned away, in answer to the petitions, which his true servants offered up for others. St. James assures us that, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man

Against national blindness we have the same Apostle's example for the same remedy, his prayer for Israel, that then persecuted the Church, was that they might be saved. Where the cords are drawn closer, for friends and kindred, O God, how gracious is it in thee, that having experienced the inefficiency of our own power, we are allowed to look to thy Spirit in its prevailing strength; and in the closest concern, in the business of our own hearts, sensible of weakness, sensible of unworthiness, who can find language to express the peace it gives to know, that the Spirit is promised whose name is the Comforter, and that he will guide us into all truth. But remember what must go hand in hand with these great notions—remember while in the body we are not yet made perfect, we are but creatures who must guard against the assaults of a corrupted nature with all watchfulness. When we pray for the Holy Spirit, it should remind us of what is so fully expressed in the epistle to the Corinthians, “Know ye not that
“ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit
“of God dwelleth in you, if any man defile
“the temple of God him will God destroy,
“for the temple of God is holy, which temple
“ye are.” When such holiness, and human nature are put in contrast, who is there that

does not smite upon the inward breast and cry, “ God be merciful to me a sinner.” Who is there that does not then feel the comfort of a promised help from the Spirit of Holiness, and a desire to pray to him for his heavenly establishing ?

As this is our bounden duty, so with increased earnestness let it be our reasonable service ; and the more we feel the vast obligation laid upon us, from the manner of our Saviour’s death, by which he went away from us, so much the more may we find that his departure was expedient for us ; that the justification purchased by his sufferings, and the sanctification flowing from his Spirit, may reclaim us from sin, establish us in righteousness, and in the multitude of the mercies of Him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, bring us through the power of the Holy Ghost unto our God. Amen.



SERMON V.

Isaiah 55—6.

“SEEK YE THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND, CALL YE
UPON HIM WHILE HE IS NEAR.”

THE blessings, which were to be conferred on Man by the promulgation of the Gospel, had been the subject of the Prophet's vision, and he endeavours, in strains of surpassing beauty and sublimity, to *express the noble acts of the Lord, and to tell the people what things he hath done* for his fallen guilty creatures. In the animated and figurative language of the Prophet, the Almighty *lays the stones of his Church with fair colours, and her foundations with sapphires, he makes her windows of agates and her gates of carbuncles*; and finally promises *that all her children shall be taught of the Lord, and that great shall be the peace of her children.*

It is not, however, to dazzle the eye, or to

amuse the fancy, that the Prophet presents these splendid pictures. Far different his object, far higher his aim, even to awaken the slumbering faith of his countrymen, to rouse the voice of conscience, and to lead them to repentance. He calls upon them *to incline their ear and come* unto him, for that he can offer to their acceptance a fountain of living waters, a fountain where *he that thirsteth can buy wine and milk without money and without price, where his soul may delight itself in fatness*. The Prophet then proceeds to point out to the believer in these promises, that his *must* not be a dead faith; that it must bring forth fruit, the fruit of repentance and amendment. *The wicked must forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.*

Since this admonition was addressed to the people of God, thousands of years have elapsed, the visions of the Prophet have been realized; the prospects which were seen but imperfectly through the gloom of distance, have burst in full glory upon our senses—and yet the minister of God, the ambassador of Christ feels the exhortation as necessary now to his listless languid flock—yes, my brethren, to his listless languid flock—

for listless indifference and languid apathy are the characteristic marks of our congregations at the present day. Does the minister of God address the voice of exhortation? Does he insist upon the necessity of repentance and amendment? These are considered as the mere periodic effusions of professional duty, as the thread-bare cant of priestcraft. Does he unfold the word of God; does he from its sacred volume select the admonitions, the warnings, the threatenings of vengeance which it contains? These are considered but as the metaphorical language of Eastern poetry, as incapable of being understood literally, as calculated for the dull and carnally-minded people of Israel. To consider the Jewish people as dull, carnally-minded, obstinate, perverse, wilfully blind, has been the hereditary tenet of professing Christians; we read the promises of spiritual blessings, of spiritual redemption contained in the Prophets, with but one feeling of astonishment at the errors of the people, who did not understand them, or did not accept them. We read the denunciations of divine vengeance for their disobedience, with an unmixed sentiment of applause for the justice which threatened it; and we follow the devastating sword of the Assyrian without one pang of regret for the vanquished,

without one thought that their crimes are not unparalleled. Never by the sacred page, is the voice of conscience roused to address us in the awful words, *Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest those which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

To the Jew the blessings of the Gospel were only depicted in the visions of futurity ; to the Jew the spiritual service of the Messiah's kingdom was only *the substance of things hoped for* ; to us all the treasures of divine wisdom and goodness are displayed ; to us all the promises of God's word are daily exhibited ; to us is it given to dwell in the days of the Son of man. The Son of God has taken our nature upon him, has made the atoning offering for our transgressions, has burst the bonds of death, and opened unto us the gates of everlasting life. With such advantages, *what do we more than they?* Oh ! my brethren, but impartially weigh the subject, and you will perceive how much less you do, and how much fewer excuses can be alleged to palliate an omission of your bounden duty and service. *He that despised the law of Moses died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment think ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, hath counted the*

blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace.

When the Almighty calls upon you, you do not indeed answer with the Jews of old, that you prefer the gods of the Heathen, you do not say we *have loved strangers, and after them will we go*—but you do say to the Almighty, you do say to the blessed Son of God himself, who calls you to him, that you *might have life*, we will not come, we have loved the world, and after it we will go. You do not like the Jews revel in the execrable impurities and barbarous cruelties of idolatrous worship, but you do offer up yourselves, your souls and bodies at the shrine of the prince of this world.

From such delusions it is now high time to awaken—it is now time to attend to the solemn call of our Creator and our Judge; *to-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts*. There was a time when this day would have impressed such truths upon your minds—Yes, my brethren, there was a time when this solemn season was observed with due respect; this season which for ages, has been set apart by the wisdom of our Church, as a yearly call to seriousness and reflection, but which now only serves to shew in more glaring colours

our utter disregard for all the ordinances of our religion, our contempt for every thing which reminds us of our duty. Far be from me the attempt to introduce pharisaical observances for true religion; far be from me, the wish to substitute the externals of devotion for its spirit; but while our soul is chained to this earth, while the corruption of our nature possesses an influence over our spiritual part, some external aids are necessary to enliven our faith, and awaken our devotion. For this purpose, stated times of withdrawing from the world, its pleasures and its cares, are admirably adapted—and have accordingly been appointed by our Church, “wisely foreseeing that should the sinner be permitted to reserve to himself the choice of a *convenient season*, wherein to turn from sin to righteousness, that *convenient season* would never come; and the specious plea of keeping every day holy alike would often be found to cover a design of keeping none holy at all.”* To further this design the services of our liturgy are well calculated, they lead us irresistibly to examine our conduct, *to look well if there be any way of wickedness in us*, to implore the pardon of our Almighty Father, and to seek the assistance

* Bishop Horne,

of his heavenly spirit, to aid our resolutions of amendment.

If we wish then to profit by the opportunity, if we will not with desperate levity drive from us every serious thought, every pious impression—let us commence this work of amendment. But where shall we begin? Even with the Almighty Ruler of the universe, let us seek the Lord, let us call upon his holy name—vain would be the expectation that slighter obligations should be observed, if the highest were violated; vain the expectation that inferior duties should be fulfilled by him, who neglected the greatest, his duty to his Creator. To seek the Almighty Ruler of the universe, we are drawn by every tie that can bind the human heart; gratitude, veneration, love, fear, all unite to impress the obligation upon our minds. Shall not fear lead us to seek the favour of the everlasting King, at *whose wrath the earth trembles, and who doeth according to his will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what dost thou?* Shall not love and veneration guide our steps to the Lord, who, *though so high yet hath respect to the lowly; who humbleth himself to behold the things that are on earth, and from the height of his sanctuary, re-*

gards the prayer of the destitute, rideth upon the heavens in their help, and in his excellency upon the sky. Shall not gratitude bend every thought of the heart, every wish of the soul in submission to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies and the God of comfort, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, who hath performed the mercy promised to our fathers, and hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Such is the Being whom the Prophet exhorts us to seek, to call upon—no unreasonable service, but our bounden duty, a duty to which even the light of nature would have directed us—For it is the fool only who hath said in his heart, there is no God.

Here I shall be told that I am addressing a Christian congregation—that there is not one within these sacred walls, who does not acknowledge the existence of a great first cause, who does not profess his obedience to the God of the spirits of all flesh—I trust there is not—I trust the step of the scorner does not pollute the courts of the Lord's house. In these days, open avowed infidelity is not the besetting sin, which threatens most visibly to subvert every principle of Christianity; is not

the prevailing vice which calls most loudly for the admonitions of the Minister of God—so far the assertion of the Prophet applies to us, when *the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

We have seen the dreadful effects of professed Atheism; we have seen it dissolve all the ties of private virtue, and all the obligations of social duty; we have seen it sap the very fabric of society, and prostrate in one undistinguished mass all that was great, all that was venerable among the sons of men—and we have somewhat profited by this tremendous example. Although a band of prostitute sophists and boasting infidels still raise among us their impious front, to dare the offended majesty of Heaven—yet we regard their attempt with horror, and shrink from the imputation of unbelief; we should consider ourselves criminal if we did not profess our attachment to the faith of our fathers—but here our sense of duty ceases—we forget that the obligation of a Christian is not discharged by a speculative belief in the existence of God, or by a speculative belief in any other truth of religion—we forget that the belief of a Christian must be a practical belief, a vital principle, powerful in opera-

tion, possessing the whole man, regulating every affection of his soul, and influencing every part of his conduct. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him—If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

To seek the Lord implies a great deal—it is the sum of religion—it is the highest elevation of sinful man to approach Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—Him in whose sight even *the Heavens are not clean.* To seek the Lord, a path must be opened through all the sinful desires of our corrupt nature, though temptations assail us on the right hand and on the left, we must pursue our course with the eye of faith steadily fixed on the one great object. The powers of the world will be leagued to oppose our progress—the Prince of Darkness will unite in array against us, and our own rebellious inclinations will assist every attack from without. To oppose this formidable host, we must remember our vow to fight manfully under the banner of Christ, we must take the *whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit.* Undismayed by the scoff of infidelity, unabashed by the sneer of ridicule, we must make the doctrine of the

Bible our creed—we must make its precepts our rule of conduct, and the example of Christ our guide. In defiance of the suspicion of hypocrisy, or the reproach of extravagance, we must endeavour to make our practice agree with our professions, and exhibit some resemblance of that embodied form of virtue presented for our imitation by the Redeemer of man.

That this is a plain unexaggerated statement of a Christian's duty, not one who hears me will deny. How few that act up to the standard, and yet we all speak peace to our souls.—Yes, my brethren, peace where there is no peace. The soothing charm, which lulls to rest our conscience, is the half-formed resolution of amendment for the future, the determination to *break off our sins by righteousness* at some more convenient time, and then to give up every thought of the soul to religion. Of all the snares which the tempter of man has spread for his wretched victims, this is the most dangerous, this is the most successful. It requires but the penetration of the most ignorant among us—it requires but the experience of the most youthful, to point out numerous instances of those who rushed along the broad way that leadeth to destruction, gratifying every evil passion in riotous indul-

gence for the present, and silencing the whispers of conscience in dreams of fancied virtue for the future, till the earth yawned and swallowed up their vain projects, to retain its prey till the trumpet of the last day shall compel it to give up the wretched trembling sinner, to the tribunal of his offended and insulted Creator. From that yawning gulph their cry strikes upon our ear, from the grave of those who have preceded us in this gay scene, issues a voice which but re-echoes the warning call of the Prophet.—Oh, that it reached our heart, and moved us to earnest and true repentance—that it brought forth the fruit of good living, and taught us to walk more warily in these dangerous days. Turn not from this as trite and familiar commonplace. Turn not from the words of soberness and truth. Let the Minister of God *stand between the living and the dead, and stay the plague*. Let the Minister of God stand between you and those who have been cut off in their career of vice, that he may teach you to make the offering that will be most acceptable in the sight of your God, not the sweet savour of incense, but the sacrifice of an humble and contrite heart. In this the house of the Lord, in this solemn place where we are surrounded by the relics of mortality, by the mouldering bodies of

those who once rejoiced to run their course in this world, can I fail in impressing upon your minds that your time is short, that the end of all things is at hand? By all your hopes of immortality I conjure you, *give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.*

But, my brethren, there is another consideration implied in the exhortation of the Prophet—one of infinite importance, that *the spirit of God does not always strive with man*, that the means of grace may be withdrawn, that there is a period after which there will be no ear to hear, nor voice to answer; that our return to the Lord must be *while he is near, while he may be found*. Oh, that I could enforce upon the minds of each of you, my brethren, this important truth, that I could rouse you from your state of false security, resting upon vague and unsettled notions of the unlimited mercy of God, and upon chimerical projects of future repentance and future conversion. If such be your expectation, as surely as there is a God, your's is the slumber of death. I do not address to you the fallible deductions of human reason, I ad-

dress to you the word of God himself. Hear his declaration communicated by his servants of old—*Because I have called and ye refused, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer—Because they refused to hearken, and stopped their ears that they should not hear, therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear, so they cried and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

From the exhortations of the ancient Prophets let us turn to the address of the Baptist, when preparing the way for the gospel of truth, when endeavouring to rouse and to save his erring countrymen. His cry in the desert was that the time was short—that *the axe was put unto the root of the trees—that the day of the Lord was coming—that his fan was in his hand, that he would purge his floor, and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.* Shall we quote the authority of a greater even than the greatest of Prophets, when weeping over the fall of his country our Saviour exclaims, *If thou hadst known, even thou at least, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace—but now they are hid from thine eyes—awful declamation—now they are hid*

from thine eyes. Do we hesitate to apply these warnings to ourselves? Do we cling with fond and lingering attachment to our false ideas of security, and refer these denunciations to the miraculous close of the Jewish government, the final withdrawing of God's favour from his chosen people? What a melancholy instance of obstinate perverseness and wilful blindness—we will not hear the awful language which applies all these ensamples to us professing Christians, which tells us all these things were written for our admonition, to warn us that we are hazarding the loss, not of earthly splendour or transitory greatness, but of a crown of glory, of fulness of joy at the right hand of God, which shall endure through successive ages, *when the heavens shall have passed away, the earth also, and the works that are therein.* Hear with what impressive solemnity St. Paul enforces this application upon his converts: *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

From the precepts of Holy Writ, let us turn to the examples it has recorded for our

admonition, and see whether we can find any inducements there to pursue our career of inattention and folly; whether the Deity be represented there as a Being whom no extent of transgression can rouse to inflict punishment. The first page of that sacred volume exposes the falsehood of such an opinion; the first page exhibits the awful scene of punishment upon the crimes of our first parents—then first did man transgress the commands of his God, and then did the sentence of the Almighty stamp in characters so legible that he who runs may read, the irrevocable truth, *the wages of sin is death*. Yes, my brethren, each of us bears about him the tremendous punishment of that crime—each of us bears about him the sad proof of his mortality, and daily is reminded that dust he is, and unto dust he must return.

Impressive, however, as was this lesson, it soon ceased to produce an adequate effect, and man *corrupted his way upon the earth*. Were all the terrors of the Lord exhausted? was the Almighty unable to make any further revelation of his wrath against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man? Oh, no! The visitation of the flood followed their crimes. For many years did the Lord grant to the guilty inhabitants of the earth time for repentance; for many years did he exhort them

by his faithful servant Noah—but at length the cup of his indignation was full, and the earth exhibited but one continued scene of his wrath; *the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of Heaven were opened, and all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died.* Here the general visitations of Providence ceased, but can we not recognise the same discipline, the same correcting hand in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the events of the Jewish History. And though the terrors of the Almighty's outstretched arm be not so openly bared to our view, can we not learn the same impressive, awful lesson, from the revolutions of the kingdoms of the earth, which through successive ages exhibit the chastisements of an offended God, justifying his ways to man by making their crimes the never failing instruments of his vengeance upon the guilty nations.

The most awful declaration of God's hatred to sin remains yet for our consideration—Even the work of man's redemption, the offering of the Son of God for the crimes of the whole world, to satisfy the justice of the Almighty, and atone for the violation of his laws. In the solemn melancholy service for this day,* you have heard the affecting recital.

* Preached on the Sunday before Easter.

Does the awful sacrifice present us with any marks of that tenderness which cannot punish, of that mercy which always spares? Assuredly not. It exhibits a being of infinite purity, proclaiming to the astonished world by the most expressive action, his abhorrence of iniquity, and must make his frail and erring creatures "tremble at his severity, even while they are in the arms of his mercy."*

These are hard sayings, my brethren, but shall I dissemble when your *eternal* salvation is at stake?—Shall I speak to you smooth things? shall I say peace where there is no peace? No. Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel—and if I have now delivered to you the plain unsophisticated word of God—receive seriously the voice of exhortation—If you do not believe the terrors of the Lord *a vain thing*; if you do not deny the *night to be far spent* and *the day to be at hand*; if you do not disregard your salvation, your eternal salvation; if you have not resolved upon your destruction, and sworn your ruin, *return unto the Lord your God and seek him evermore*. This day is the accepted time—this day you have been summoned to renew your vows of obedience to your God, to claim on the an-

* Scott's Christian Life, B. 3.

niversary of your Redeemer's triumph over sin and death, the benefits of that mysterious sacrifice. Cold must be that heart, insensible to every call of religion, which determines to reject such an invitation.—Whatever mistaken notions as to the duty of receiving the Holy Sacrament have crept into the Church, the most lukewarm Christian acknowledges the necessity of obeying the command of his God on that great festival. Commence then the work of preparation, "that ye may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy table." Awaken your minds to a just sense of the high solemnity you are about to celebrate. Now, even now commune with your own hearts, determine to break off your course of carelessness and inattention, in the spirit of humble and earnest repentance, implore the mercy of the Most High—Quit not, my beloved brethren, this holy temple without calling upon his sacred name, and may *he hear in Heaven his dwelling place, hear and forgive.* Amen.

SERMON VI.

St. Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

“AND IT CAME TO PASS, AS HE SAT AT MEAT WITH THEM, HE TOOK BREAD AND BLESSED IT, AND BRAKE, AND GAVE IT TO THEM. AND THEIR EYES WERE OPENED, AND THEY KNEW HIM; AND HE VANISHED OUT OF THEIR SIGHT.”

THE journey of the two disciples to Emmaus, has ever been considered one of the most pleasing and interesting incidents in the Gospel History. The simple beauty of the narrative, the feelings and discourses of the disciples, the manner in which our Lord joined them on the way, guided their conversation, and finally revealed himself to them, with the wonderful effect produced on their hearts by his language, all contribute to place this singular occurrence in a distinguished rank, among the facts which St. Luke alone has recorded for our edification, and for which every sincere and pious Christian must feel

such cordial gratitude to this inspired Evangelist.

Let not this precious portion of the Sacred History be lost on us, my brethren, but let us implore the Divine Spirit to bring it home to our affections, that our hearts may also burn within us when we hear (or read) the gospel of our Saviour, and join in his holy ordinances.

We learn that, on the day in which our blessed Lord rose from the dead, two of his disciples were travelling to Emmaus, a village a few miles distant from Jerusalem; "and they talked together of all these things which had happened." One of the disciples was named Cleopas, and the early tradition of the Church maintains, that the other was no less than the Evangelist himself; an idea which derives no small support from the many minute and exquisite touches in the description, which seem to indicate that the historian was himself an eye witness of what he relates. But what was the subject of their conversation? The most important that had ever yet engaged the thoughts or reflections of mankind! The cruel sufferings and death of him whose heavenly life and doctrine, and gracious miracles, had raised their hopes so high, only, as it appeared, to plunge them into

deeper despondency at his sad and unexpected end. They had been expressing, most probably their mutual surprise, that he, who could open the eyes of the blind, and bring the dead to life, could not enlighten the minds of his judges, or soften the hearts of his persecutors; that he who could calm the raging sea, and expel devils out of the bodies of their unhappy victims, could not tame the ferocity of the infatuated populace, who cried, "crucify him, crucify him;"—that he who could have summoned legions of angels to defend him, should have permitted a few persons with sticks and staves to lead him away captive, and deliver him into the hands of his enemies. To form any adequate idea of the state of mind in which the two disciples found themselves on this memorable journey, we must conceive ourselves in their situation, and we shall then, and then only, rightly understand it. They had numberless proofs of Christ's extraordinary power over the order and course of nature—they had heard him speak, as never man spake before, with a simple force and majesty of language, wholly unknown to the scribes and usual teachers of the law—they had often witnessed the meekness and tenderness of his manner toward his disciples, and at the same time exulted, perhaps, in

that singular assertion of his real dignity, which struck such awe into the buyers and sellers in the temple, and made them fly before him. With such strong impressions on their minds, they trusted, that it was he who should redeem Israel. They doubted not that he was the promised Messiah; they had, therefore, a firm faith in him—why then were they desponding? Because that faith, however strong, was *partial*. It embraced but part of the Redeemer's character. It admitted his miraculous powers, and supernatural wisdom and knowledge, but overlooked his mysterious priesthood, his grand mediatorial office, as the Saviour of sinners. It was here their faith was deficient. They gladly received Christ as the great and powerful Prophet, who was to restore his people to freedom, and the Divine favour; but they neither recollected the spiritual nature of that freedom, nor examined the conditions of that mercy which was now revealed to mankind. Viewing the character of their Lord and Master in this partial light, it is no wonder that they were surprised and dismayed, when they beheld him a captive, dragged before a Heathen tribunal, insulted and reviled, accused of treason and impiety, and yet dumb before his accusers, regardless of self-vindication, and then con-

demned to the most disgraceful death as a malefactor. This was too severe a trial for their imperfect faith, and they were, therefore, dispirited and sad. But did not our Lord often foretel to them, that he was to suffer and to die? Yes, but this intelligence was so inconsistent with their expectations of a temporal deliverance, that they received it with reluctance, and accordingly when it was fulfilled, their faith in Christ as a King, was shaken, and little remained but their belief in his prophetic character and office. They could not be persuaded that the Messiah was to be treated with such indignity and cruelty. They saw the distressed and unhappy state of their country, exposed to the insolence and tyranny of a foreign power; but they looked not into their own hearts, nor examined the true causes why their country was reduced to such degradation. A suffering Saviour who was to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, by offering up his precious life for the sins of the world, was not agreeable to their Jewish prejudices; and, therefore, if our Lord had not expressly foretold his sufferings, the faith of his disciples would have been entirely overthrown by his death; an event which, under these circumstances, secured their reliance on him as

a Prophet, while it confounded their worldly notions of him as a deliverer.

As the two disciples were conversing and reasoning together on these extraordinary occurrences, the Evangelist informs us, "that Jesus himself drew near, and went with them, but that their eyes were holden, that they should not know him. And he said unto them, what manner of communication are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" It may be asked, why did not our Lord at once disclose himself to the disciples? because he preferred the solid and durable effect which his intended conversation with them was to produce in their hearts and minds, to that sudden surprise, that abrupt termination of the course of their ideas and feelings, which must have resulted from such an unexpected manifestation of his real person. It was expedient for them, first, to examine and avow the true cause of their despondency, and to hear with candid and unbiassed judgments, the exposition of those Scriptures which they had overlooked, but which so clearly described the characters of

the true and spiritual Saviour of mankind. Therefore, "their eyes were holden that they should not know him;" for otherwise their joy and admiration would have only added strength to their erroneous hopes, and weakened their attention to that gracious process of instruction, which they would then have been tempted to consider as a matter of less importance, while their eyes and thoughts were fixed upon their beloved Master, thus suddenly restored to their view. It was on this account most probably that our Lord joined the two disciples on the way, as a *stranger*, and invited them to particularize the events to which they alluded: "And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief Priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done"—as if they had said, "how can you, who are coming from Jerusalem as well as we, be ignorant of the wonderful events which have so lately occurred in that city?" They little knew how deeply the

person whom they addressed was interested in these things—or that the very event which they deplored was that which insured the redemption of Israel—or that on this very day he had risen from the dead to assume his royal dignity, and to commence the mighty work of a triumphant and glorified, as he had already finished that of a suffering Messiah. They had indeed, heard a report of his resurrection before they quitted Jerusalem. But the two disciples appear to have left the city before our Lord was personally seen by any of the Apostles, or before Mary Magdalene had informed them of his appearance to her in the garden. Under these circumstances, we might at first view be surprised that the two disciples did not remain in Jerusalem, until this report was fully ascertained. But if they had done so, we should have lost, not only the Evangelist's narrative which we are now considering, but with it, a fine example of that internal evidence, which so strongly characterizes the gospel of our salvation. The Evangelists themselves have recorded the slowness of their own belief in the resurrection of our Lord. It was not a fact which they were ready and predisposed to admit, and on which, of course, their testimony might then be liable to suspicion. But this is

not all—why did they doubt it? Did not our Lord foretel that event, as well as his death? Yes—But as his death seemed to crush all their hopes of a temporal Messiah, so they annexed no peculiar advantage to mankind from his resurrection. They knew that he was a Prophet highly favoured of God—as such they could believe that God had raised him, and taken him to himself; but that the body itself had thus triumphed over the grave, and could again be an object of their senses, this they were not ready to believe, because they had not as yet any clear idea of that spiritual justification for which Christ rose from the dead, and which was to have its final completion in the happy resurrection of all true believers in his mysterious death and sacrifice.

Let us not wonder then that the two disciples left the city so soon; while their minds were under the impression of their national prejudices, they could not feel a lively personal interest in the report of Christ's resurrection; and therefore, whether they believed it or not, they equally gave way to despondency, at the disappointment of their worldly hopes. As the cross of Christ was a stumbling block to the unbelieving Jews, it was, at first, to his followers the cause of confusion

and dismay. The two disciples, therefore, who were travelling to Emmaus, fully prove that they were under that impression, by their leaving Jerusalem at *this time*; and their journey is, of course, a strong additional evidence of the truth of the gospel, because it was so consistent with the state of mind in which they must have felt themselves at this very period.

Before we pursue this interesting narrative, let us dwell on an important practical application of what has been already laid before you. The two disciples acknowledged, that Christ was a Prophet mighty in word and deed. They admired his miracles, loved his person, extolled his morality—in a word, they received him as a great and inspired Prophet—but no more. His patience under sufferings and an ignominious death were viewed as proofs of his consistent and perfect virtue, and of the cruelty and injustice of his enemies. They knew nothing yet of the all-powerful efficacy of his blood in procuring the remission of sins, nor the necessity of his grace to awaken, support, and confirm repentance and obedience. They were therefore dispirited and sad. Their hearts and souls were still unchanged. The internal comforts of a pure and sanctifying religion

were still strangers to their bosoms. The attractions of the world were as strong as ever. Ignorance of their own sinful propensities and native corruption was as deeply rooted in their breasts, as if they had never heard that Christ was "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." And yet, such is the low and miserable pittance of faith in Christ, to which a certain class of nominal Christians would reduce all who adopt their cold and paralyzing system. If we were by nature strongly disposed to virtue, piety and goodness, or if we were merely intellectual beings, a great prophet might be a sufficient guide and instructor in the path of life. Christ might be to us *wisdom only*—we should require no more. But if there be any truth in Christianity—if the Scriptures be the word of God—if man is prone to evil, and neither able nor willing to reform himself by his own power, and if the history of mankind, and the experience of every heart, confirm this momentous truth, it will be vain to look for redemption if Christ be not made righteousness and sanctification also, to those who call upon his name? We must look to his cross for pardon, and to his grace for holiness, or we shall never see him as *our* adored Redeemer in his Heavenly Kingdom. We may pass through

life with some apparent ease, while pleasure soothes or prosperity smiles on us, but when troubles assail us, when the infirmities of age or sickness, or the clouds of death approach, to view Jesus Christ as a Prophet only, will afford but little comfort to our distracted souls. This surely will not relieve us under the goading consciousness of our past transgressions—of our repeated rejections of that spirit which alone can enable us to love our crucified Saviour, and obey his royal and holy law. Let me then beseech you to guard against such a wretched substitute for true Christianity as the Socinians offer you. If you do not cordially believe in Christ as your High Priest, and Heavenly King, you believe no more than a follower of Mahomet will freely admit, (for even he acknowledges that Christ was a Prophet mighty in word and deed) but with this alarming aggravation of danger on your parts, that you receive the moral law of the gospel as the rule of life, while you know that you have not obeyed it, that you have not looked for pardon at the foot of the cross, nor sought that aid from above which would have cleansed your hearts and strengthened your weakness.

If any of you, my brethren, are tinged with any secret stains of this proud, impure, and

pernicious heresy, let me conjure you, as you value your souls, and would escape from ruin everlasting, to examine yourselves strictly, and with the two disciples travelling to Emmaus, to place your hearts under his searching influence, who can open the Scriptures, enlighten your minds, speak peace to your consciences, and draw you to him, and to your Heavenly Father by the cords of love and pious gratitude.

But to resume the gospel narrative—when the disciples informed the unknown companion, who joined them on the way, of the subject of their conversation, and the cause of that melancholy with which their countenances were overcast, how deeply must they have felt the force and manner of his reply! “Oh, fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Well, indeed, might their hearts burn within them, when they heard the mysterious stranger pouring forth the copious tide of Scripture prophecy descriptive of the exalted and spiritual character of that Saviour, whom they had, in the blind-

ness of their hearts, viewed only as an earthly Prince and Conqueror. How must they have felt their own folly, and the worldly nature of their prejudices, when they heard that the true Messiah was to bruise the serpent's head? That in him, not only Jews, but all the nations of the earth were to be blessed—that he was to be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and was then to preserve from their spiritual enemy, all those who sincerely believed in the healing efficacy of his Cross and Passion—while unbelievers would make that Cross their scorn, and shoot out the lip, and shake the head, saying, “he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, if he delighteth in him.” With what sensations must they have heard that the true Messiah was to have his hands and feet pierced—receive gall and vinegar to drink—and have his raiment divided by lot among his executioners—that he should be despised, and rejected of men—wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities—that the chastisement of our peace was to be upon him—and that with his stripes we are to be healed—that on him the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all—that he was to be numbered with the transgressors—make his grave with the wicked—but that the Lord would not

leave his soul in Hell, nor suffer his holy one to see corruption—and, that *after* all these things, he was to have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth—that all things should fall down before him—all nations serve him—that his name was to endure for ever—that he was to be the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Nor were these the only prophecies which, we may justly conceive, their Divine Instructor now placed before the astonished disciples—all that related to his birth, his miracles, his heavenly life and doctrine, as foretold in the word of God, were presented to their minds—that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, who should be called Emmanuel, that is, a present, an incarnate God—that out of Bethlehem should come forth the Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting—and yet, that he should feed his flock like a shepherd, gather his lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young—that in his day the deaf should hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind should see out of darkness, the meek increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men rejoice in the Holy one of Israel—that they which erred in spirit should come to

understanding, and they that murmured, learn doctrine—the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, and the lame man leap as an hart—that he who was to perform all these mighty works, should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets—that he should not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, and yet should bring forth judgment and mercy to the Gentiles and the Isles, which shall wait for his law—that it was he whom the Lord should anoint to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted—to proclaim liberty to the captives—to comfort all that mourn, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that so, *he might be glorified*.

Surely we cannot wonder, when the disciples heard these and numberless other Scriptures, relating to the great Redeemer of mankind, urged too, with that dignity, and gracious influence which our Lord imparted, that their hearts should burn within them—that they should feel a strong attraction towards this extraordinary person who manifested such an intimate knowledge of the sense and spirit of those Scriptures which they had hitherto overlooked or misinterpreted.

While the Sun of Righteousness was thus gradually diffusing his heavenly light over the minds of the two disciples, and shedding the reviving comforts of his gracious spirit upon their hearts, the bright luminary of this lower world was rapidly sinking towards the west, and it was evening when they reached the village. Their unknown companion might now have disclosed himself, or suddenly vanished from their view—but in either case he would have left a less imperfect impression on their minds, and a less instructive incident for our direction. Observe then the consummate wisdom and the finished delicacy of our blessed Lord's conduct on this occasion. He had joined them on the way, *uninvited*. He had asked the subject of their conversation, and the cause of their apparent sorrow, and, when they told him, he commenced his reply and his applications of Scripture, with a reproof eminently calculated to rouse their attention, and to excite them to the closest scrutiny of his subsequent communication. He was himself fully aware of the effect produced internally on his hearers, and, with that exquisite knowledge of the human heart which he ever displayed, he did not impair that effect, by any apparent neglect of the nice and delicate rules of social manners. “He made as

though he would have gone further." He did not obtrude himself upon their place of retirement or repose—he did not force himself on their hour of bodily refreshment, nor seek to know the private object of their journey to this village—to share in their society any longer was not for him to demand, but for them to offer; and accordingly he did not enter, until they shewed the earnest sincerity of their wish to retain him—and thus, while they constrained him to abide with them, they cultivated still more in their own hearts, the admiration and love which his presence, and language, and manner, had raised within them. Jesus now sat down at meat with them, and when he had *eaten*, and thus proved the reality of that human body which he had that morning raised from the dead, and which had been the object of their senses on the way, "He took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight." It would require no less than the language of inspiration itself, to convey any adequate idea of the impression now made upon the disciples. Conceive yourselves so circumstanced, and you will feel at once that it was an impression which time could not efface, and which at this moment perhaps, is

remembered with lively energy and joy in Paradise, by the souls of Cleopas and his happy companion in this ever memorable journey. By this wonderful termination of his intercourse with these two disciples, he completed in the fullest manner the Divine process of instruction with which he so eminently favoured them. After removing the veil of prejudice which had concealed the true scripture characters of the Redeemer from their eyes—after he had worked upon their hearts and kind affections, by displaying the mercy and goodness of God in the gracious dispensation of his beloved Son, when he had convinced them that Christ ought to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory, He then prepared to shew them that *he had entered into his glory*, and all that he had hitherto taught them was as sure as the Almighty Word of God himself. They saw him eat, and most probably had laid their hands on him, when, with an affectionate intreaty they constrained him to abide with them. They had no doubt that their Instructor had a body like themselves—but their eyes were not opened to know him, until he had blessed the bread and broken it, and given it to them. It was then, and not till then, that he vanished out of their sight.

This sudden disappearance of their beloved Lord, and at such a moment, stamped with the seal of Heaven itself the Divine lesson, which the disciples had now received. It fully confirmed the Divinity of him, who could thus command their senses, as well as enlighten their minds, and while it unanswerably demonstrated the truth of his resurrection, and all the important consequences to mankind, depending on that truth, it banished every vain and delusive hope of a temporal Messiah, and fixed the spiritual but solid basis of the Redeemer's kingdom. They could never more entertain a doubt of his power to protect them, or of the truth of his promise, to be ever present with those that *rightly* call upon his name. He had already convinced them that his blood was shed for the salvation of the world—that this was the copious, the precious, the inexhaustible source of pardon for the sins of mankind, and he closed the whole by that gracious and expressive action, in which he reminded them of the blessed sacramental institution which was evermore to be a special means of grace and spiritual life to all true penitents, all sincere believers in his Word, his Cross, his Resurrection and his Glory. Not satisfied with giving them the light of truth, he administered

the food of life. He blessed bread, and brake, and gave it to them—and it was then he vanished from before them; as if to impress indelibly on their hearts, that they were thenceforth to live on him, not by sight, but by faith, and to derive spiritual growth and comfort from his blessed sacraments as the vehicles of his grace and power.

If you then hope to derive from the Holy Communion of his body and blood, those advantages which it was designed to communicate, you must approach it with feelings and convictions similar to those of the two disciples when Jesus vanished from their sight; and there can be no question, that if you do, Christ will be known of you also in breaking of bread. Your hearts must abandon all worldly compromise between sin and duty, between the lusts of the flesh, and the pure and holy law of God. You must deeply repent of your past transgressions, and look to the Cross of Christ, and to that alone for pardon. You must utterly and unreservedly reject the pride and presumption of self-dependance, and seek by fervent and constant prayer, the cleansing and invigorating influence of the Holy Spirit. You must consider Christ, not only as a Prophet, but as your High Priest and King, the author and

finisher of your salvation. Approach his holy table, therefore, with sincere contrition for the past, and firm resolutions for the future. Be well grounded and stedfast in your faith, and let your consciences be free from all malice or ill will towards any of your fellow-creatures, and you may offer yourselves at that table where your Saviour has promised that he will be specially present. Examine, then, your lives, your favourite passions, your secret motives, your feelings towards all your neighbours ; search them deeply and thoroughly, or presume not to approach that table where the searcher of hearts shall meet you, and when his inspired Apostle has warned you, that they who receive unworthily, eat and drink their own condemnation, or judgment, not discerning the Lord's body. If your self-examination be conducted as it ought, as becomes a sinner supplicating for pardon through the merits of a Saviour's Cross, the grace of God will enable you to feel the depths of your own sinfulness and infirmity, and the high and inestimable value of that Cross. You will discover the plague of your own hearts, the true source of every unhappy, unkind, ungenerous, and unchristian feeling, and you will be led with humility and contrition to that all-powerful Saviour, who is mighty to pardon, and

who has never yet cast off the faithful penitent; and is at this moment perhaps, secretly knocking at your hearts, for the admission of his gracious message of love and mercy.

O resist him not, my brethren, constrain him by fervent prayer, by frequent meditation on his Holy Word, to abide with you. Let not this sun go down on any evil purpose, or uncharitable thought, seek your God where he may be found, and you will surely find him—whether in the public service of the Church, or in the retirement of your homes; in the employments of industry, or in your journeys by the way, think on his law, his love, his promise, and you will find him the companion of your path, your guide in difficulties, your protector in danger, your sovereign comfort in the hour of death—and when you receive the symbols of his body and blood, you will feel that your Saviour is present, and has given you the fruit of that tree of life, which he alone can restore to the fallen and disinherited sons of Adam.

SERMON VII.

Ecclesiastes ix. 10.

“WHATSOEVER THY HAND FINDETH TO DO, DO IT WITH ALL THY MIGHT;—FOR THERE IS NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE, NOR WISDOM, IN THE GRAVE—WHITHER THOU GOEST.”

If these words require any recommendation to our attention, the character of the person who wrote them, will afford sufficient:—He had tried every department of life; he had been placed in every circumstance of society; he had exhausted every pursuit of man; and had entered into every research, which could furnish experience of what the present world could present or promise. He was as pre-eminent in wisdom, and in knowledge, as in station and in opportunity; and at this time also, he was under the inspiration of God, which giveth wisdom and understanding even unto the simple.

But to advert to these recommendations

to our attention is unnecessary. The words themselves speak with a voice of power which we cannot resist, and in a language which we cannot misunderstand; and we feel that, if we overlook their warning, we overlook them at our soul's peril.

They present a very melancholy view of the future destination of man. They depict his last abode as a place, where there is neither device, nor knowledge, nor work: and on this they ground a most important injunction. Let us together, humbly beseech God of his infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, to make it come home to the heart of each of us, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might;—for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave—whither thou goest."

We have here brought before us a very melancholy period of our existence; "the bier, and the shroud, and the mattock, and the spade, the lowly grave, and cold dark damp vault." No one here present is exempted from this prospect, however variously classed in rank or different in age, whatever may be their variety in usefulness or piety: earth's highest glory ends ~~here~~: here it concludes its noblest work.

Let us glance for a moment at the ideas con-

tained in the latter part of the verse. "There is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave," whither we are all going. When we reach that every thing is dead alike. The body lies there in insensibility—no feeling can be excited there—the mind, the most exquisitely sensitive is there in inactivity—the soul the most acutely alive to the happiness or sorrows of its friends, has there no sympathy with their joys or miseries; afflictions may like a flood invade its dearest connexions, peace may pour forth like an overflowing well—but to both alike it is unconscious and unfeeling. There is no knowledge there.

There is there too no wisdom—what distinguishes man from the brute ceases;—man—proud man—has there no talent, nor genius, nor conception, any more than the beasts that perish.

There is there no exertion:—nothing can be planned for the grave, or done in the tomb. There is no wish can be executed in the vault. The most excellent of the earth—the most eminent in holiness—the most useful in the Church of God, are then all for ever laid aside. How pre-eminently active was Paul—how industrious—how energetic—how he traversed sea and land—city and country—

man's habitation and the desert—to bring his fellow-sinners unto God ;—but from the moment of his entering into his resting place in the earth all his activity, industry, and energy ceased.

Think then, my beloved friends, if the soul be neglected now, nought can be done for its salvation even by God in the grave—if you leave the immortal spirits of those you love in ignorance until death, you can render them no service—if your own soul's immortal state be neglected now, no attention can be directed then to their best interests.

On this melancholy topic it is impossible not to stop and offer a few obvious reflections. Is the body to be committed to the ground—earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes—is it to become the loathsome mass where corruption may riot? Is it to be separated from all who loved it? Why should this noblest work of God be thus marred? Why should what the wisest of the ancients in wonder called the little world be thus thrown aside in contempt? Why should this curious frame, which presents the creature—next to the great intelligence—the Creator of all things, be thus vilely cast away? Why should God's vicergerent upon earth be thus fixed on for such a melancholy display?

It shews us what the Bible plainly tells;—that man sinned, and that “sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and that thus death has passed upon all men, in that all have sinned.” Is it possible for the Almighty God by any objects around us in the present world, by any thing that he could do to give a more striking display of his displeasure against sin, than the death he inflicted on the body, or to exhibit more clearly the fatal and destructive influence of sin? When we see the body thus crumble into dust, we witness one of the most conspicuous displays of sin’s fatal power. However dear man was to God, his chiefest, noblest, greatest, best work in a creation, that was all “very good;” as soon as ever he became a transgressor he was obliged to declare, that as dust he was, so to dust should he return. Thus, man returns to the earth from whence he was taken—thus we have all become brothers of corruption and the worm.

From these effects on the body, let us estimate its effects on the soul. The body is destructible—death strikes it through, and there is an end of the matter—but the soul cannot be thus destroyed—the soul cannot thus die—the power of insensibility can never reach it—it cannot, like the body, go to a place where there is neither knowledge, nor device, nor

work. No, it must exist eternally with all its vast capacities and powers in exercise, and if an object of the Divine displeasure, this will not be experienced in a consignment to corruption, but in the awful perpetuities of the Divine abhorrence, and a lying down for ever in the blackness of darkness, and being left to itself in misery for ever and ever.

But here what cause have we not, to thank God that he has not done to the soul, as he has done to the body. The body is given over to the full operation of the consequence of sin—to be corrupted and destroyed;—but so he has not done to the soul—he has had mercy on it—he has provided for it a ransom. What expressions of thankfulness now become us, that in such a wonderful manner, even at the expense of giving up his only begotten Son to shame, to misery, to suffering, to death, to pains which we cannot conceive, and which, therefore, no word can express—that thus the soul can be delivered completely from sin, while the body is wholly given up as incurable.

Another thought connected with this presents itself—that is the blessedness of the religion of Jesus Christ, and the consolation it offers. It would be gloomy to dwell only on the circumstances connected with the death of the body, but even the dark chamber of death

is illuminated by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Even into it light breaks, and the Bible shews us how each may learn to adopt the Apostle's language, and say in triumph, "O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

We come now to the important counsel founded on the text of the mortality of man, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might;—for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave—whither thou goest," for thou must die, thou must go to the grave—whatsoever therefore devolves on you to do, do it with all thy might.

This is a maxim which mankind have almost universally adopted—some rightly, some wrongly. The man of pleasure profess-
edly goes on this principle—

Live while you live, the Epicure will say,
And seize the pleasures of the passing day.

Give every moment you can seize to enjoyment, for you shall lie long in the grave, where you can have none. Would to God, that its importance were in every respect felt as strongly as it is in this. Would to God, that

we knew our real pleasures and our real interests. In its application to the business of the world, it is no less strongly felt. Labour while you can, says the man of the world, for your family—struggle for success while strength remains—work while you yet have time—be industrious while you can, for you will not be long here.

But surely it is for much nobler purposes than these, that this injunction was given us in Holy Writ—even to shew to sinful man what he has to do, even that if he neglects he is criminal and worthless.

Permit me then to call your attention to some few of these things, which our hands should find to do, and which we should do with all our might.

There are two views of ourselves and of our relation to God, with which we should all be acquainted, even from our earliest childhood, and even from our catechisms. That we are born in sin, and that we are the children of wrath. Every man descended of fallen Adam, comes into the world a child of wrath. Children of wrath were we, even as others saith St. Paul; he is polluted and death proves it—he is sinful and he shews it, both as to the right in which he fails, and the wrong in which he indulges. Do we see men as they grow up

following purity? Do we find them seeking their supreme happiness in the sense of God's favour? Alas! we see the very reverse of all this. Man in one shape or another of transgression, goes astray from the womb, as the Scripture has testified.

Man, in short, in every stage of his existence gives evidence, that he is not right, or even like the other creatures of God in this world. They follow their instincts from the earliest periods; they never controvene them; they obey implicitly the impression made on them originally by their Creator for their own happiness, for all their happiness lies alone in the line of the development of their instincts—but man is the contrary.

Man is obviously made for God; he is formed by the very nature and constitution of his mind to be a moral agent, and to be a religious creature, which none of the inferior animals can be. Though explicitly formed for these ends, you see him going wrong instead of right; and acting diametrically opposite to his constitution as a creature of God. Though he has reason, religion and the interests of his soul are the last things to which he will attend. He feels accountable, and yet he turns this into affliction, and misery; going on perversely in a way which he himself suspects is

not right ; this feeling was intended by God for his guardian, but he himself makes it his own tormentor even before the time.

What else means what we so often hear of ? an evil conscience—nothing but this feeling of accountability acting on the sinful character, and telling him that he has accumulated evil on himself, and that in the sight of the eternal God, whom he has offended, and who is to be his judge. Indeed, had we time we could follow this up, and shew that man is as remarkable for acting contrary to his nature and to his true interests, as the inferior creatures are for acting in coincidence with the instincts which God gave them.

What then is the inference ? That one is right still as first enacted, and that the other is wrong and perverted from his original. Perverted and marred by their parents' sin. Thus we are born in sin, and by consequence the children of wrath ; and as true as it is that God hates sin, he abhors it, he denounces his vengeance against it, and sooner than pardon it, he will give up to death his own, his only Son, to testify to men that while he forgives their sin, it is not because they deserve it, but because he is merciful, and in his rich mercy found an expedient whereby "he might be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus."

Now then, what is the first thing that our hand findeth to do? To seek reconciliation—by our birth we are sinful and corrupt—we should seek to be born again, and to be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. This is what we most need—this is precisely what is most brought before us in the gospel;—when the Apostle Paul would characterize the gospel, he does it in words to which I shall beg your attention:—“And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as as though God did beseech *you* by us, we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 Corinth. chap. v. 18, 19, 20, 21.

What then is one of the circumstances in which man is placed? He is exposed to God’s righteous vengeance by his sins. The gospel is the ministry of reconciliation, announcing that God is reconciled to man, and praying man to be reconciled to God and embrace his

salvation, for God has provided a ransom—that his Son came to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Thus God is represented in the Gospel, as reconciled in Christ Jesus to miserable sinners. Thus the gospel shews at once our ruin, and points to the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and says, “Whosoever believeth in him shall be saved.”

This then is the first thing our hand findeth to do—to embrace the plan of mercy which he has provided and revealed, committing ourselves into his hands, to have all our sins pardoned and our iniquities blotted out.

My dear friends, we have lived to no purpose unto this day, unless we have already come to God through the faith of his Son, to receive his rich pardon and forgiveness. I must correct myself—I said we have lived to no purpose, but this was incorrect, I must retract my words; we have lived to purpose, we have treasured up wrath for ourselves against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, our guilt we have made greater, our conscience we have the more hardened, our condemnation we have the more accumulated.

But we are not merely exposed to condemnation; we are also under the influence of cor-

rupt principles. It is not enough to be pardoned, we must be released from their dominion, we must be created anew; all title to Heaven lies in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, but God has connected with this a meetness for heaven, and a possession of the dispositions which are consonant to the Divine will. When Paul addresses the Corinthians, after adverting to what they had been, he gives us this view—"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11. It is not merely justification that cancels our guilt which we require, but we require also the cleansing and purification of our nature, so as to fit us for that state to which God will raise us; and the blood of Jesus Christ, which rescues from the guilt of sin, is that also in virtue of which we are rescued from its power and dominion.

In vain have we lived until now, unless we have received heaven's rich provision, a new heart, a right spirit—"From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—Ezékiel

xxxvi. 25, 26. This is the operation of the Holy Spirit the sanctifier, that Being of whom when we were taught our catechism, we were instructed to say, that he is “the sanctifier of all the elect people of God.” If you are not sanctified, you are not one of the elect people of God; you have neither part nor lot in the matter; you have no reason to expect that you will ever be admitted into glory. As this is then indeed, one of the most important things that our hand findeth to do, surely we should supplicate the influence of the Holy Spirit the sanctifier. It is delightful to read how God speaks of his gifts, how richly, how freely he bestoweth, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Matt. vii. 11.

If God were to say to any one of us, ask, and I will give you the greatest wealth ever enjoyed—ask, and I will grant you the greatest joy ever experienced—ask, and I will make you the greatest of the great, and the noblest of the noble;—it would be of no value to you, if he gave you not the gift of the Holy Spirit; He would promise nothing in comparison of what he has here promised. For what is the world and its grandeur? He promises more

than all these, inasmuch, as the soul is pre-eminent in value above the body, and eternity immense in duration beyond time. He says, I will give my Holy Spirit to them that ask me. If ever we stand before God's bar, and have neglected the Spirit, have lived without seeking it, and died without receiving it, this declaration will fix a deeper, deadlier pang in our consciences, that will be enough to make us miserable for ever. I might have had this promise fulfilled—God intreated me—God besought me—God supplicated me—but I burst through mercy—I burst through justice—despised the one, and defied the other—and have finally brought down vengeance upon my head. Surely then, if we are under the influence of corrupt principles, the first, last, chief, only thing to do, is to supplicate, and pray for the influence of his Holy Spirit, that we may be sanctified and purified by his power.

I can merely allude to a few other things that our hand findeth to do—as soon as ever a man is anxious about his own soul, he becomes interested about those of others. Those nearest to him, those dearest in his afflictions will be the first—the father, the mother, when they know their own soul's value, will be anxious for their children's salvation. I re-

member to have heard, but lately, at a public meeting in the country, a gentleman make an observation on this subject. "I have many children said he, but I would rather that they should go into the world without wealth, without acquirements, with accomplishments, than that they should be ignorant of this one thing, the value of the soul." This was a Christian parent's wish; he would rather have his child see his own corruption, and pray for God's grace, than possess all other things beside—no display of talent or attraction, or manner, nothing that could promise rank or wealth, could stand in competition with their praying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Should not then the hand of those that know the gospel's inestimable value find this to do? to make it recommendable to their children, their friends, their connexions, to expound it to the whole world—to send the light of the truth of the gospel to every land. This our hands should do—this we should do with all our might. There is no time to be lost, because no time is to be accounted certain, however, many presume on the future and neglect the present—thus we miscalculate. Now alone is the accepted time; now only is the day to seek the salvation either of others or of ourselves—to bring the saving health of

God's grace not only before our friends and relations, but before all nations. For all nations, equally with all individuals, stand in need of it, and God who in his wisdom and his mercy found the only remedy, has in his expansive benevolence destined that the whole earth should be filled with his glory.

I feel it unnecessary to remind you, that an interesting portion of our life has just ended—another year has begun—look back—have we lived as accountable and immortal creatures? Have we been seeking pardon from God, and perfection in holiness? if not, it has been passed to little purpose—the year has been a blank at least—no, it has all its guilt and criminality marked in the book of God. Have we been concerned about our own souls and those of others? If not, let us now “seek the Lord while he may be found;” let us now seek to “make our calling and election sure;” and may that gracious Spirit, “from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed,” impress with saving efficacy on our minds, the words of the text—“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might;—for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave—whither thou goest.”



SERMON VIII.

Romans i. 17.

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

THAT faith is the rock upon which Christ hath built his Church ; that it is the principle upon which man is to rest his hope of salvation, we all profess to believe. It is not, therefore, necessary, that I should occupy your time by enumerating the various proofs which serve to shew, that the doctrine of our Church in this respect, as in all others, coincides with the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. It will be, I trust, more serviceable to us all to consider attentively what that faith is upon which so great things rest ; and what propriety there is in so highly estimating its importance. The first we can, of course, learn only by an humble examination of the Scriptures ; and the second we may be assisted in comprehending by a consideration of our nature and condition,

"Faith is," as the Apostle declares, "the substance," or rather the substantializer, "of things hoped for, the evidence," (or that which produces a conviction) "of things not seen." To dilate a little—the sublime brevity of the definition, we may say, that faith is that principle within us, by which the hopes and evidences which would otherwise be vague and shadowy, become permanent and substantial.

Upon the word which is translated in our Bibles, "substance," I have one remark to make before I proceed. According to the philosophy of the ancients, "every body" consisted of what they termed a substance and its accidents. By "accidents," they understood those qualities which are cognizable by our senses, and by "substance," that unknown principle in which the accidents inhered. For instance, when they examined any "body," they were competent by their senses to perceive a certain form, and colour, and weight, and various other qualities, and these they termed "accidents," not imagining that they constituted the "body," but that they were properties belonging to it. Beside these, they concluded that there was some existence which their senses were incapable of discerning, and which had the power to keep together the various properties which they noticed, giving them, as it

were, a definite and permanent habitation. The name they give to this unknown existence, we have translated "substance;" and St. Paul, who was well acquainted with the philosophy of his times, uses precisely the same word, when he terms faith, "the substance of things hoped for."

According to this, faith is that principle, or essence, which, as it were, binds and fixes our hopes; which reduces them from a state of evanescence and confusion, into a settled and consistent form, by means of which, the hopes and promises respecting eternity become incorporated with us, and form a part of our very being, and without which, the hope of a hereafter may dart through the mind without settling there, and the promises of God may appeal to the heart, and make no lodgment within it, "not being," as the Apostle says, "mixed with faith in them that heard." But faith is also the evidence of things unseen, and it is by being such an evidence that it has become the substance of things hoped for. It is the evidence of things unseen. The word which we translate "evidence," signifies full and perfect conviction, it is demonstration, or such full and clear evidence as brings conviction to the mind. Thus, when you speak of the evidence of your senses, you speak of

the knowledge derived from them of the existence or nature of external things ; and as you would define sight, the evidence of things seen, the Apostle defines faith, “ the evidence of things not seen,” so that we may conclude, that the faith by which the just man shall live, the faith which is “ the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” is a conviction by which the world to come is as powerfully and as vividly apprehended by the soul, as the existence of the world in which we live, is manifested through the senses.

Having thus defined what faith is, the Apostle proceeds to shew what it has power to do, and places before us many instances of its efficacy ; some proving that it has made man acceptable to God, and others setting forth examples of heroic virtue, which the faithful were enabled to exhibit in the sight of man. Amongst these examples, the most splendid instance of faith, and that from which we can most fully understand its power, is exhibited in the conduct of the Patriarch Abraham. In his extreme old age, the Lord promised him a son, in whose name his posterity should be called, and through whose seed all nations should be blessed. Neither his own age nor the age of his wife prevents him from relying on the

promises of God. The child is born, and a new and powerful affection is awakened in the heart of the aged parent. Again the Lord spake to him and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of." Now as a man and a father, Abraham must have felt the pleadings of nature earnest against such a command. We can imagine also, that his reasoning faculties might have been seduced into the service of his affections, and have furnished plausible arguments against obedience. He could not, as we could, object, that the direction was contrary to the written commandments; but he might have considered how God had promised that this son Isaac was to be the father of mighty nations; he might have argued, that by obeying the present command, he must frustrate the past decrees; and, he might therefore conclude, (in the same manner as many reasoners amongst us) that God could not possibly have issued the command, because *he* could not discover the wisdom of it.

This would be the reasoning adopted by the natural man, but faith pursued a different course of inquiry. Abraham having first as-

certained that it was God who spoke to him, did not commune with flesh and blood, as to whether he should obey. He was to put his child to death—the child he loved—the child upon whose life the promises seemed to depend ; but his faith was strong that God would confirm the assurance he had given ; he knew that he could restore as well as take away, and thus with a steady faith, he hoped against hope, “believing in a God who quickeneth the dead, “and calleth those things which be not, as “though they were.”

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness ; he believed when beyond all rational expectation, a child was promised ; he believed when it was announced, that from this child a great posterity should descend ; and when the same God who made this promise, commanded him to perform an act by which, according to human calculation, the promise must be defeated, Abraham conferred not with flesh and blood, but proceeded to obey the command, steadily believing that God would vindicate his own ways, and that, by means beyond the thought or imagination of man, his word of promise would conquer all seeming impossibility, and stand fast for ever. Such was the belief which was accounted to Abraham for righteousness ;

such the strength of that sublime principle by which the just man shall live.

This view of Abraham's faith, while it shews in a strong light, what that principle is, will also serve to illustrate the propriety of allotting to it so important a place in the fabric of the Christian religion. The practical object of religion is to restore us to the state from which we have fallen away, to remove the curse under which we were lying, and to heal the corruption of our nature. But the Scriptures intimate that all evil came upon man in consequence of the sin of unbelief. God had said, "Of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden thou shalt not eat"—and "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And the serpent said, "ye shall not surely die." The result you all know, the serpent was believed, the word of God was disbelieved, and death came into the world. Is there not, therefore, a harmony in the œconomy of the Divine Institutions, that, since the disbelief of our parents brought sin and evil upon themselves and their posterity, the belief of Abraham should be accounted to him for righteousness, and should make all nations blessed in his seed; that as the want of faith in our first parents caused them and us to die, so the possession of this prin-

principle should cause him in whom it operates to live.

But the importance of faith is manifested more clearly than it would be by attending only to this fitness in the œconomy of the Divine Government. The object of the scheme of redemption was two-fold. It was to effect blessings *for* us, it was to perform a change *in* us. It was to open the gates of Heaven to receive us, and it was to make us meet that we might enter therein. It is with these latter graces that our business lies. Man lying in corruption is to be purified by religion, and it is not difficult for us to comprehend that the nature of the corruption with which we are afflicted, demands the operation of a lively faith as a means by which it can be healed.

For what is the nature of all human corruption? May I not, in one brief sentence express it to be, a devotion to the things of sense, and an estrangement from what is spiritual? Think for an instant upon the character of human corruption, and see whether this definition does not perfectly describe it. The change in our nature produced in consequence of the fall, appears to consist in the increased power of all that savours of mortality in us, and the consequent feebleness, and almost deadness, into which

the spiritual affections have been reduced. Hence it is, that the power of this present world is so influential upon us, and that the power of the world to come operates so feebly. There is within us, naturally, no principle which vividly convinces us of the power and the presence of God in all that we see or feel; and, consequently, we are, in general, slaves to the influence of what can be seen, and what is present, because we are not conscious of the power of what is unseen, or what is to come. Will you not find, the consequence of such a state, that even those natural affections we most cherish, continually lead us into evil? Look with a calm eye upon half of the sin committed in the world, and you will perhaps trace it to a source which we are apt to consider interesting or pure. How many times will you find friends, parents, kindred, committing for each other what they term trivial ills, that they may secure the prospect of what they consider great good—and how shall those things be remedied? If even the best of our natural affections may lead us to transgress, what shall be instrumental to restore and reclaim us? Evidently the principle of faith—the principle which makes us feel the power of the world to come, and the presence of God—the feeling which gives the hope of immortality a settled resi-

dence within us—the principle which becomes a counterpoise to the influence of the world, by keeping ever in the mind a full conviction that there is a better world to come. This is the principle through which our restoration can alone be effected; which is of power to direct all our affections; to chain up all evil propensities; to make God's law the standard of our actions, and cause us to shudder at the thought of ever violating it, however splendid and tempting the visions may be, which would seduce us from our duty.

You have seen how it was exemplified in the conduct of Abraham; that his hopes and affections, and the appearance of natural impossibility could not shake his obedience towards God, or cause him to transgress. Compare this with that conduct by which Jacob obtained his father's blessing, and see how the want of faith led to a deception which God punished by the separation of the mother and her son, and by the fears and disappointments which frequently harassed the mind of Jacob. It had been promised to Rebecca, that her younger child should bear rule over the elder; she had seen that this promise was in progress towards fulfilment, in the renunciation which Esau voluntarily made of his birth-right; and yet, when Isaac sends forth his son,

and promises that he will upon his return bless him, her faith fails; she does not reflect upon the fixedness of God's promise; she does not feel in how many ways the purpose of God may be made to stand fast, and the designs of Isaac may be frustrated; she does not apprehend that the voice of God himself might call upon him and command him to bless his younger born; and, therefore, because the affection for her younger child is strong, and because the hope of his prosperity is dear to her, she, distrusting God's power, and unconscious of his presence, makes an act of dissimulation one of the means by which the promise of God is fulfilled.

Thus, a hope derived from the Divine promises, and the purest of all earthly affections, became the source from which crime proceeded. But had the faith of Rebecca been well fixed, no weak temptation would have had power to move her. She would have relied upon the Lord's promise—she would have waited patiently the developement of his designs—she would have been conscious of his presence, and would have respected the moral law, which he had impressed upon her heart, too highly, to debase herself, and offend her God, by counselling falsehood or imposture.

Thus, we have seen what faith is, and what power it has. It is a belief in the unseen realities, as powerful, and as constraining, as the belief we have in the external world. It has the power, by raising the mind to the contemplation of eternal things, to overcome all that in the natural man is enmity against God, and to regulate and restrain those affections and desires which may, under proper guidance, be conducive to our improvement and our happiness, but which, if not under the controul of a lively faith, from the infirmity of our nature, will frequently lead to evil.

But you have, I dare say, already observed that the faith we have been considering, is not that which contains the peculiarity of the Christian doctrine. We have considered rather what the Christian has in common with the believers in a natural religion, than that which is peculiar to himself. We have been considering, if I may use such an expression, the faith of nature, rather than of revelation. The faith of Plato, rather than of Paul.—“He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.” This is the faith upon which the religion of nature rests, which we must admit was gloriously illustrated by many a noble Heathen. But there is a faith

different from this, a faith in things which flesh and blood have not revealed to us, a faith which opens the kingdom of Heaven, and in which the Christian Church has laid its everlasting foundations. “And Simon Peter, answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” St. Paul teaches us, “that it is a true saying and worthy of all men to be believed, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This is the faith upon which Christ hath built his Church, the belief in his office, and a reliance on his power to save.

Now, it is to be observed, that however the faith of the Heathens might agree in one characteristic of true faith, inasmuch as it gave evidence of things unseen, it is only the Christian faith which can be truly the substance of things hoped for. The Heathen, let us suppose, believed that there was a God, and that he was the rewarder of all that diligently sought him—but evidently this belief might be accompanied as well by terror as by hope. He had a belief of a great being who was to recompense him according to the life he led, evil for evil, as well as for virtue a reward; and the consciousness he must have had of his frail and corrupt nature would, most assuredly, prevent him from feeling in his faith the com-

fort of an abiding hope. But what is the Christian's faith? It is a principle which gives him an assurance not of God's justice only, but also of his love; a principle, which not only convinces him that there is a better world, but directs him to the way through which he is to gain admission. It is a principle by which he is taught, that as he was born in sin, Christ died that he might be born again unto righteousness. It is a principle, which teaches him that he who is to judge him hereafter, is at this moment his intercessor. In short, it is a principle which, convincing him of the future world and the judgment to come, brings into his heart, with all their spiritualizing and consoling efficacy, the promises and encouragements so gloriously promulgated in our Saviour's life and death, and so faithfully registered in his everlasting Gospel. Such is the faith upon which Christ hath founded his Church, the faith by which the just man shall live.

Pause here for a moment, and say, whence did the Apostles learn this great doctrine, of a saving faith? Could they learn it from the Jews, amongst whom all flesh had corrupted his way, amongst whom the love of God had grown cold, and religion had degenerated into ceremony and ostentation? Was it from

such a people the doctrine of faith could be learned—from the Sadducee who believed not in a resurrection—from the Pharisee who challenged to himself the approbation of God, because he fasted twice a-day, and gave thanks that he was not as the repentant publican? Was it out of these whited sepulchres—fair without, within the tenements of death—full of all uncleanness—that the power of faith could come forth as a mighty principle to animate the doctrine of the Apostles, and to subdue the kingdoms of this world, “that they should become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ?”—Or, was the doctrine communicated by the Gentiles? Did the Apostles, from the deceived or the deceivers in “the nations,” learn the power of a principle before which the rites and the iniquities of Paganism would be rebuked, and which could convert the cry of “great is Diana of the Ephesians,” into an universal acknowledgment, “that they be no God’s which are made with hands?” The whole frame and essence of Jewish polity and Heathen idolatry, declares that it could not. Where the power of faith was known, idolatry could not abide, and the disguises by which hypocrites might hope to deceive, must be far unlike those which the Pharisees assumed. What shall we say then—

that the humble uninstructed followers of our Lord discovered of themselves, this grand principle, this corrector of the evils of our nature, this adjuster of the irregularities of life, this earnest and assurance of eternity ;— or shall we admit as a more natural explanation, that he who gave them strength to declare good tidings to mankind, revealed to them the mighty doctrine which was hidden from the wise and powerful of former times, and which was now communicated that the servants of the Lord might sojourn on this earth in hope—and that they might depart from it in peace, when, though their eyes may not have seen, their souls have apprehended the assurance of God's salvation.

Do you ask whether this great salvation shall be granted to faith alone? Whether faith ungraced by the endearing qualities, or the sublime virtues which Christianity teaches, shall insure everlasting life? I hope to call your attention at some future period to the connection between faith and works—my answer at present is, that a true lively faith cannot be imagined alone, but may be expected as naturally to bloom into good works, as a healthy tree bears fruit and blossom. How could it possibly be, that any man appreciating duly the privileges which Christ purchased

for him at ~~so~~ vast a price, should not shew himself most anxious to set forth his Redeemer's praise; that he who felt himself called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Christian covenant, could hold fellowship any longer with that darkness out of which he was called.

Allow me to direct your attention to the efficacy of a far inferior principle. Allow me to suggest to your minds, remembrances which history may have traced there, and to remind you of those agitating emotions by which you have been sometimes moved, as you read of the proofs of loyalty and love exhibited by the subjects of some insulted monarch. Have you not read of times and circumstances, in which this feeling strongly influencing a gallant people, has sent them forth in defiance of peril and disaster, to support with energy their Sovereign's cause, or to perish, if it sunk, amidst its ruins? Have you not read of the passionate throbbing of young hearts, and of age bracing on unwonted arms, and of mothers sending forth their sons with patriot pride, and almost without a tear, to the field where their King had called them? Have you not read of whole nations feeling, as if in one bosom, a lofty emotion which made ordinary cares and individual interests be scorned, and

which precipitated a people into dangers and difficulties where no private interest called them, but into which they rushed with a prodigality of life and possession, which it would not seem that all the passions of our nature, concentrated into one fiery impulse, and urging forward in one direction, could be mighty enough to account for?

Why—why is so little of this loyalty evinced towards Christ? What a lesson does history read us on our want of wisdom as children of the light. Man, in obedience to the suggestions of loyalty for an earthly monarch, ready to relinquish life and possession, and clinging to a ruined cause with a devotedness, which not even poverty can abate—and this same man, called—not to ruin and wretchedness—not even to hazard in property and life—not even to delusive or unfounded expectations—but to the sure hope of an everlasting felicity, to light and blessedness, and a crown that can never fade—and called not by any unknown or lying lips, but by him who was tried and proved our great benefactor; by him whose compassion and solicitude were awfully attested in his mighty works, and his mysterious passion; by him who dwelt among us with a glory which still shineth to lighten every man that cometh into the world; who

dwelt among us with the might of omnipotence, and with the meekness of redeeming love—with the splendour of Divine majesty beaming through the veil which he assumed, and with the weight of a world's sins and sorrows heavy upon his soul. When called by him to believe in him, and to rely upon him, and to follow him through purity of life into the purity of heaven—man, this same man, who would stand forth where his sovereign's banner waved, and follow it to ruin, suffers Christ to call upon him in vain, and chooses rather to dwell amid the wearying dreams of a troubled sleep, than to awaken at the call of a crucified Saviour, and confess him, in his life and hopes, as his master and his God.

Let it not be imputed as irreverence, that I have made this comparison—I know how lessening it is to the true notion of Christian faith, to be likened to any earthly principle or feeling—but still, I cannot but feel, that in a high and an extended sense, faith is loyalty to Christ—and that the circumstances of this world are ordered so as to prove it. Keep then in mind, my brethren, that there are two kingdoms upon earth, and that you must decide to which of them you will give your faith—both, here, are incomplete, and are in progress towards their consummation—the happiness

which the Christian feels is not unbroken, and the evils of the world are not wholly unrelieved; but one is the kingdom of heaven, and the other is the kingdom of evil. A time will come, when the glories of the one will shine out with a light which never can be dimmed—and also, when the evil of the other shall deepen into unimaginable horrors. To which will you attach yourselves? Shall we fling ourselves with desperate fatuity into destruction, or shall we labour and pray, that we may rise out of the dream of an ungodly life to the hope of glory?

God grant that thus we may petition with fervour and success, and that he who is mighty to seek and to save, will so establish and strengthen our faith, that here we shall feel the comfort, and the purifying influence of an abiding hope, and that that hope shall become certainty hereafter.

SERMON IX.

Hebrews iv. 10.

“THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST FOR THE PEOPLE
OF GOD.”

I SHALL not, at present, enter into a lengthened description of the different kinds of *rest*, of which the Apostle makes mention in this and the preceding chapter of his Epistle—but, with God’s assistance, take the words in that plain and obvious sense, which has already, perhaps, suggested itself to every one who looks beyond this vain and transitory scene, to another and a better world—and, whether upon scriptural or delusive grounds, hopes at last to reach a state of unchangeable happiness—a serene and peaceful haven, when the soul shall have passed the waves of this troublesome and tempestuous world, and entered upon immortality.

To the due understanding, however, of the verse, as it is connected with the Apostle’s

reasoning, and in the hope that I may induce you this day, to peruse either in your families or in your closets, *the first four chapters of this Epistle to the Hebrews*—it may be useful to mention, that in order to excite the Jews to give more heed to that solemn question which occurs at the opening of the second chapter—“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” St. Paul reminds them that as their fathers had, through unbelief, provoked the displeasure of God, and been excluded from the promised land: even so, the posterity of those punished should beware lest they also should fall after the same example of unbelief—that there was still another and a better rest to be enjoyed by the faithful followers of a crucified Redeemer—a rest typified, indeed, by that fruitful land into which Joshua had conducted the Israelites; typified also, by that weekly rest which God ordained when he ceased from his glorious work, and “saw that it was very good”*—but as far superior to them both—as the concerns of eternity surpass in value and importance the wretched objects of this world. “There remaineth,” he concludes, “a rest for the people of God”—a heavenly, spiritual Canaan—pre-

* Genesis i. 31.

pared not for the Hebrews only, but for the faithful of every age and nation; and earnest therefore, should be the endeavour, and great should be the fear of every professing Christian who is anxious about his soul, “lest a promise being left us of entering into *His* rest,” into the happy and glorious rest of God, “we should (*even*) seem to come short of it.” If God, says St. Paul in another place,* spared not the natural branches, *let us take heed lest he also spare not us*. He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses—of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who deliberately rejecting Christ as a Saviour, and no way affected by the mercy of God as it is revealed in his Son—in effect, treads under foot the Redeemer of the world—counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing—and does despite unto the Spirit of Grace?† The mercy of the living God, as it flows upon mankind through Christ, is indeed inexhaustible, but it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.‡

To return to our subject. Perhaps the whole compass of our language does not contain a word more productive of sweet and

* Rom. xi. 21. † Heb. x. 29. ‡ Heb. x. 31.

soothing associations than that of *rest*! In its most ordinary signification, it brings before my mind a weary traveller, at length arrived at the termination of his toilsome journey. —I think of a shipwrecked sailor escaping from the waves, and in the consciousness of safety sinking into a profound and tranquil sleep. I think of the placid repose of infancy. But give me the wider range of revelation, and say, what language except that which Scripture itself has used, shall express the ideas which are implied in it! The shipwrecked man quickly forgets the perils of the sea, and embarks again upon its treacherous surface—the traveller soon prepares himself for fresh fatigues—the toils of life, its corrupt pursuits, its anxious cares will quickly leave their furrows upon the infant's brow—but far different the rest which "*remaineth for the people of God.*" When this corruptible shall put on incorruption—when this mortal shall put on immortality, the faithful enter into that state, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain;* where they shall neither hunger nor thirst any more—where those who walked together in Christian fellowship until death

* Rev. xxi. 4.

divided them, shall meet again and dwell for ever, in sweet communion with each other and with God.* It is a state where all that is dark and mysterious shall be cleared up, and the soul shall behold with unclouded vision,† the celestial glories of the Sun of Righteousness,‡ where all shall know even as they are known.§ It is the heavenly Jerusalem where those who overcome shall sit upon a throne with Christ,|| shall cast their crowns of glory before the Lamb, who hath redeemed them by his blood, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever.¶ Comforted by this assurance which the text conveys, I can bow in resignation to the will of God, and praise his mercy, even though he strips me of friends and family, and leaves me alone in this world's wilderness. The heart will mourn at each bereavement, but why should the Christian continue to grieve for the departed. "I heard a voice from Heaven which said, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." They have been delivered from the bondage of corruption—from "the miseries of a sinful world"—"they rest from their labours." They have only set out a little earlier upon their homeward journey, and

* 1 Thess. iv. 17.

† Heb. xii. 14.

‡ Rev. xxii. 4.

§ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

|| Rev. iii. 21.

¶ Rev. iv. 10.

soon we shall follow, provided we are found ready, when the summons comes, to render up our account with joy. Followers of Christ, you may expect to be afflicted, for God dealeth with you as with sons, and what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?—but let the anticipation of this happy rest, cheer you amidst the trials by which it is the will of God to prove you—yet a little while and the soul shall quit its earthly tabernacle, and soar into the regions of eternal day—an ever-living spirit of God—perhaps at this moment the bridegroom cometh—prepare to meet him—there is joy amongst the blessed angels, says our Lord, over one sinner that repenteth—but oh! what ecstacy pervades the heavenly host, when the warfare is accomplished—when the race is over—when death is swallowed up in victory, and the justified sinner no longer militant but triumphant, enters into the joy of his Lord.

Unspeakable, however, as is that everlasting bliss, the text which we have chosen declares for whom it is reserved—the people of God. May the Holy Spirit be with us, whilst we inquire who they are, and what is their unerring characteristic. Alas! they walk along a narrow path, and few comparatively in number is that little flock on whom it is the Father's

good pleasure to bestow the kingdom—not from any awful sentence of rejection—not from any irrelative condemnation passed upon the many, but from their own deliberate and sinful choice—“ye will not come to me that ye might have life.”*—They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil†—are his declarations, who willet not that any should perish; and therefore, upon the delinquent’s own head rests the blame of his depraved preference of this world, and its empty joys, to Heaven and its unimaginable glories.‡ Yes, brethren—satisfaction has been made for sin. The remedy—praised be the undeserved mercy of God—the remedy is as prevalent as the disease.—Though sin abounded, grace did much more abound—and though we learn from Scripture, that faith is essential to our salvation, THAT faith which leads the sinner to Jesus as his only Saviour—which purifies the heart—and works by love—and produces holiness of life—if we perish for want of it, it is solely because we resist the strivings of the Spirit, and will not drink of those living waters, which flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and of whose refreshing streams all are invited freely to partake.

* John v. 40. † John iii. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

The people of God, then, my brethren, are surely not those who live in the commission of any known sin, or the neglect open or secret of any of his commandments. What communion hath light with darkness? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Neither are they those whose christianity consists merely in the partial, or even strict observance of the forms of religion, and the performance of their social duties. There was one who thought so, but happily for man, so prone to self-deceit, so disposed to set aside the Saviour, and to exalt himself into the vacant place—to turn from that living way by which alone the Father can be approached, and to strike out a path of his own; happily for man, it was Jesus Christ himself who undeceived him. These commandments have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet? Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor;* eradicate that one passion which rules the heart, and prevents its entire devotedness to the will of God. Our Saviour loved him, but he rejected his partial

* Our blessed Lord, who knew the heart of man, had previously enumerated only Five Commandments of the Decalogue—he now condemns the vice of covetousness, which above all others dries up every affection of the heart, whether to man or to God—St. Paul forcibly calls it idolatry, Col. iii. 5.

loyalty ; and the young and amiable moralist departed sorrowful, and returned no more.*

Neither do the people of God, my brethren, possess inherently the qualities which can in any way entitle them to the appellation. One deadly and malignant disease infects the human race, without a solitary exception ; and the new-born babe is not more incapable of discharging the duties of adult life, than the sinner's heart is by nature incapable of turning to God, and rendering to his Creator the obedience which he requires. The Scripture hath concluded all under sin,† says St. Paul, and the judgment is not less deserved than it is awful. It was not always thus. At the creation, a covenant of works, by which I mean the promise of a heavenly reward to the performance of a stipulated and possible obedience was established, and man might have fulfilled that which was required ; but at the fall, the power was lost, and that covenant of works became a curse—for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in in all things,‡ which are written in the book of the law to do them.§ Yes, my brethren, if I am to be judged by the law of works,

* Matthew xix. 16, &c. † Gal. iii. 22.

‡ Gal. iii. 10. § Deut. xxvii. 26.

by the requirements of a code which prescribes an unsinning obedience.—Let me go sorrowing all my days, for every moment that passes brings me nearer to my eternal condemnation—let me dwell amidst the ruins and convulsions of nature—they are the fittest emblems of my lost condition, and of my final doom. But though it be not in man unassisted by grace, to acquire the glorious character of being one of the people of God—to regain the image in which he was created—though it be not in man, unchanged by the influence of God's Holy Spirit, to direct his own steps towards the mansions of blessedness, the rest of God—thanks be to God for his unspeakable, his free, his undeserved gift; there is a covenant of grace which supersedes the covenant of works—there is a Lamb which hath been slain from the foundations of the world—there is a great High-Priest, who is passed into the Heavens—Jesus the Son of the Most High—and though you be the chief of sinners, if you lay your hands upon the head of that victim, with a heartfelt acknowledgment, that you have erred and strayed from Christ's fold; that from head to foot there is no health in the moral system; if you feel your need of pardoning mercy; and only venture to ask it in the name, and through the me-

diation of Christ; let no man close his ears or his heart from the comfortable heart-cheering message which we are authorised to deliver, though your sins were red as crimson, they shall be washed white as the snow in the fountain of his blood, and the Almighty will accept you just as if your obedience had been sinless, and your life without a blemish. I pray you, therefore, as an Ambassador of Christ, to be reconciled to God—for in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ*—ye who have taken refuge in the hope set before you, shall take your station amongst the people of God, for you there remaineth a happy and eternal rest.

Here then, my brethren, is the great inquiry answered, who are the people of God? They are those who worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in Jesus Christ—who have no confidence in the flesh;† they are those who embrace his offered mercy—they are those who have not received the grace of God in vain, that grace which is freely offered to all—they are those who come to him with a deep conviction of their moral nakedness, their moral blindness, their moral poverty, and feeling

* Eph. ii. 13.

† Phill. iii. 3.

the misery of their awful condition, earnestly desire to be reconciled. This is the Gospel of God—good will from Heaven to men—glad tidings to a sinner, peace on earth; the peace which passes understanding; that precious legacy which a dying Redeemer bequeathed to us, and which the world can neither give nor take away. Oh! that we had a sure conviction of our acceptance with God, through that infinite sacrifice—for then would we long to flee away and be at rest; then would we earnestly desire to depart and be with Christ, to be unclothed of this mortal covering, that death might be swallowed up of life; then would the partial renewal of the Divine likeness in the soul here, be the earnest of its total restoration in the realms of glory hereafter.

And here, there opens upon us a most delightful part of our subject. There is a rest for the people of God; there is a place beyond the grave, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary rest; where there are rivers of joy and pleasures for evermore; no more struggles with the tempter—with indwelling corruption—with a seductive world, but a new Heaven, a kingdom, a throne, a crown, an incorruptible inheritance, an exceeding weight of glory, a joyful and extatic sense of *His* presence, a settled and

abiding conviction that for ever! throughout all eternity! the soul is safe! that we are beloved by *Him*, who is the source of all happiness and the centre of all joy. But is there not a foretaste of that bliss granted to the believer even whilst he dwells in the tabernacle of the flesh? I do not mean that he is exempted from the cares, the sorrows, and the temptations of life—we know it to be a state of warfare, in which the faithful soldier of the Cross must expect to fight, and endure hardships. Nay, it would appear as if affliction, whether from within or without, were the peculiar badge of the reconciled Christian, for “we were appointed thereunto,” says St. Paul,* and again, “we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience,” and again, “ye yourselves also know that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God†”—but surely *He* who made the soul can give it a calm and delightful consciousness, that it is in a state of acceptance and reconciliation; that its reliance is upon one, who is mighty to save, and has promised a crown of life to those who continue faithful to the end. Surely the soul can enjoy that satisfaction which is above all earthly pleasure;

* 1 Thess. iii. 3.

† Rom. v. 3.

the whispering approval of a conscience which is at peace, an anticipation of the blessedness of dwelling for ever with the Lord. Surely, Christians can meditate with delight, and be satisfied that it is well founded, upon the love of God in dying for the soul, and upon his mercy in calling them out of darkness into his marvellous light; they can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the saving knowledge of him, whom not having seen they love, and whom to know is life eternal. —Brethren, our Reformers were men of sound and sober views, at the same time that they knew experimentally the vitalizing influence of true religion; no one would ever think of accusing them of extravagance; no one would venture to say, they mixed strange fire with the pure and ethereal flame which burns upon the altar of the true *God*: they define godly persons to be such, “as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ,* mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things;” and it might as well be said, that the resuscitation of a drowned person will not produce in him a consciousness that he lives, as that one who yields to the

* Article 17.

persuasive influence of the Holy Spirit, which would lead him to sanctification, is not sensible of the power which “lives inwardly within him:” call it, if you will, in its first and most early motions, the moral sense, the voice of conscience,—in Christians of advanced experience in spiritual things, it is a settled conviction, that the peace of God which passes understanding is a delightful reality: such is the evidence of those who were not likely to be misled, and who were, in the largest sense, Bible Christians; and though I am aware of the perversions of enthusiasm, or fanaticism, or hypocrisy, and the prejudice which prevails against it; it is a sacred duty in the minister of God, to declare explicitly, that they which have believed *do* enter into rest, even whilst they are passing along the rugged path of their earthly pilgrimage; and that, however various in degree, be the perception which the soul enjoys; still there is a consciousness, there is a well grounded persuasion, that the soul is in a state of acceptance, quite consistent with that fear and trembling, that humble-minded watchfulness, which should ever accompany the man who knows by sad experience, that though he standeth, he should always take good heed lest he fall. The Spirit itself *beareth witness with*

our spirit, that we are the children of God ;* and *His* presence is known by the joy which he imparts, the serenity which he diffuses, the hopes which he communicates, and last, not least, the holiness of life which he produces. The fruits of the Spirit are, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.† This is our rejoicing, (excuse me that I multiply quotations on this most important subject)—this is our rejoicing, what! the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of *God*, we have had our conversation in this world.‡

Ask then yourselves, my brethren, have you this day a well-grounded hope of entering into that rest which remaineth for the people

* Rom. viii. 16.

† The peace which a religious soul is possessed of is such a peace as passeth all understanding—the joy that it meets with in the way of holiness, is unspeakable and full of glory. Religion leads us into the porch of Heaven, and to the confines of unity—it sometimes carries the soul into a mount of transfiguration, or to the top of *Pisgah*, where it may take a prospect of the Promised Land—thus giving to it sometimes, some anticipations of blessedness, some foretaste of those joys, those rivers of pleasure, which run at *God's* right hand for evermore.—See *John Smith, Cambridge, Select Discourses*, 4to. p. 415.

† Gal. v. 22.

‡ 11 Cor. i. 12.

of God ? Are your lives a testimony that you may rank with the people of God, with the the holy Church of Christ throughout the world, and in every age ? Are you conscious of a growing conformity to the precepts of the gospel, an increasing resemblance to that mind which was in Christ—a gradual, but progressive subjugation of the unruly affections and corrupt thoughts, to the obedience of Christ ? Happy are the people who are in such a case ; yea, blessed are they who have the Lord for their God.

But if on the other hand, you have never yet taken your part with the people of God ; if you are of the number of those who profess that they know him, but in works deny him ; receive with meekness the word of admonition, which I address to you earnestly and affectionately. The error which condemned the Israelites was the hardness of their hearts ; the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. It is the same reason, which in the present day, operates as a bar to the sinner's entrance into the rest of God. He hears the Saviour's call, come unto me, and I will give you rest—but he receives it not with faith in the heart ; if he believed it, he would hail it with joy, for that Gospel is the power of God

unto salvation to every one that believeth; he would come to Jesus Christ as to a sure refuge; he would cast himself entirely upon him, and take him as his only Saviour; he would feel that there is no rest either here or hereafter, but among the people of God; and that if the Lord should swear in his wrath, we shall not enter into his rest, everlasting woe, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched, would be the fearful condition of the condemned soul throughout all eternity.

May the Lord Almighty, my brethren, grant us every one to escape that awful doom, by laying hold of the hope that is set before us; may his grace enable us to walk by faith here, that we may enjoy hereafter that glorious rest which remaineth for the people of God. Arrived, if I may so say, at the very confines of our heavenly Canaan; beholding its delightful valleys, its goodly gardens by the river side, its trees which the Lord hath planted; may none of us by our hardness of heart and unbelief find ourselves at the last excluded. Behold our Joshua ready to conduct us in; let us go up AT ONCE and possess the land, for through his strength, we are well able to overcome it;* there we shall find rest for our souls, there, there alone

* Numb. xiii. 30.

we may hope to enjoy a perpetual Sabbath in the immediate presence of God ; to pass an eternity of happiness “ in those elevations of pure devotion, which the sublimest moments of our most sacred and happy days on earth can teach us but imperfectly to conceive.”*

* Doddridge.

SERMON X.

James ii. 26.

"FOR AS THE BODY WITHOUT THE SPIRIT IS DEAD, SO FAITH
WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD ALSO."

THE Scripture doctrines respecting Faith and Works have appeared to some superficial readers as not easily reconcilable together; and, accordingly, we find that various persons have attached themselves to one of these doctrines, refusing to have its nature explained or its extension limited, by a reference to the other. Difficulties of this kind frequently originate in the spirit in which the Holy Scriptures are consulted. It is much too general a custom to apply ourselves to the study of them, not in a teachable spirit, which prompts us to seek the wisdom they contain for our own edification, but in a spirit which makes us search the Scriptures as a book of reference, in which we seek authorities in favour of opinions previously derived not

perhaps from the word of God, but from our own vain imaginations.

All those who consult the sacred writings in this arrogant spirit, may certainly be struck with what they will term a discrepancy between what should be considered two parts of the same doctrine. When they find, in various parts of the Scripture, that life and happiness depend altogether upon true faith in our Saviour Christ, and hear it, in others, as unequivocally asserted, that we shall be judged according to our works—when they hear St. Paul so strongly urge upon the mind the doctrine, that it is by faith the just shall live, and St. James, with equal urgency, assert the importance of actions, they are disposed to conclude, that there is a discrepancy which cannot be explained away, and, accordingly, addict themselves to whatever favours their own preconceived notions, confining themselves to a part, rather than endeavouring to comprehend the whole, and attaching themselves to a doctrine which is false, because it is exclusive. It is to be hoped that errors like this will not be of long continuance. The seeming contradictions are now so fully shewn to be only seeming, that it is in every man's power to set his mind at rest, as to any difficulties upon this subject which may have perplexed him.

St. Paul, we are given to understand, speaks of faith out of which good works proceed, and St. James of the works which spring out of a true faith. St. Paul speaks of the works of the ceremonial law, and St. James of the works of the Christian covenant. St. Paul writes to persons who relied upon ceremonial works, so implicitly as to imagine the performance of them actually and indispensably requisite for salvation—and the writings of St. James should preserve us from any so erroneous notion, as that St. Paul had not inculcated the necessity of the Christian virtues.

This is the view which our Church has taken of the subject, as it is explained in the articles. We are accounted righteous through faith—but works spring necessarily out of the faith through which we are saved. It is to the illustration of this entire doctrine that I request your attention.

We observed, upon last Sunday, the fitness there was, in allotting to the principle of faith so important an office in the Christian religion. A consideration of man's nature and destiny was sufficient to shew, that it was by the exercise of faith the purposes of God respecting him were to be accomplished. These great purposes are, that we should be made meet to enter into that Heaven which has been

opened for us, and it is almost self-evident, that the principle which realises in our minds a belief of the future world, and a reliance upon our Saviour Christ, is that which will serve best to form in us a character suitable to the object for which we were created.—It will detach us from the influence of sensual things, and by keeping the mind fixed upon the great realities which are not seen, will gradually assimilate it to that Heaven for which it has been destined. Faith is, as it were, a manifestation of loyalty in a rebellious world, and, accordingly, when the kingdom of God has come, it gives a title to become a subject.

But while every thing we read of in the Scriptures, teaches us that admission into Heaven will be given according to *our character*, it is equally certain, that the judgment will be formed according to *our works*. And why? because although our works cannot merit any favour, although they cannot procure Heaven for us, yet are they necessary, whenever they are possible, for proving and perfecting that character which Christ renders meet for Heaven—although they cannot atone for the want of faith, yet they are appointed as means not only to prove, but also to stablish and strengthen it.

“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” The comparison here instituted by the Apostle, seems admirably calculated to explain the doctrine which he designed to illustrate. I entreat your attention to a minute examination of it. The use of the body, we all know, is to communicate between the soul and the external world—it interposes between the spirit of a man and the objects of nature, and is a mean of communication between both—conveying to the mind images and impressions, and being again the instrument by which the mind acts upon matter. My meaning will more readily appear, on your considering the office of the senses, and remembering that all bodily organs and faculties are means by which the soul receives the knowledge of material objects. Thus the eye, a bodily organ, is nothing more than a medium by which the ideas of form and colour are derived from objects of nature. So long as it effects this purpose, it partakes of life—it is a means of linking soul to soul, and man to the world—but when it has ceased to perform such an office, when the spirit has withdrawn from the body to which it belongs, then, although the organ still remains with all the beauty of its admirable mechanism, it no longer partakes of life, for there is no living

principle with which it is connected, and for which it serves as a medium of communication. In short, the body with all its organs of sense, is a means of exciting the mind to action, and when the connection between mind and body is dissolved, the latter no longer performs the function for which it was accounted a living thing. Thus, we sometimes speak of parts of the body as dead, because impressions made upon them do not convey ideas to the mind, and because they are not made use of in the performance of any action.

Consider faith as a new principle, or a new sense in the soul, having for its office, to give notice of the things belonging to the other world, and you will see that there is great propriety in pronouncing it to be dead, if it be not accompanied by works. You have all, perhaps, had opportunities of witnessing what is termed a dead hand or arm ;—and what is it to which you apply such a name ? It is to a member upon which impressions hurtful to the body may be made, and yet no such intimation conveyed to the mind as would cause the danger to be avoided. And if a man say that he has faith, and yet do not refrain from things that may hurt the soul—if he present himself thoughtlessly in the way of

spiritual dangers, and do not manifest by watchfulness and prayer a sense of the temptations to which he is exposed; how can we suppose that the faith which is so inoperative in producing that salutary fear and trembling in which salvation is to be worked out, can have more life in it, than the withered hand from which power and sensation have withdrawn, and which is, in consequence, no longer an agent between the soul of man and the external world. To express all this more briefly, faith may be considered with respect to the next world, what our bodily senses are with respect to this, and as we reckon the latter dead when they are not conducive to the business of our present life, so we are to reckon faith dead when it is inoperative with respect to eternity.

It is a very important truth which the Apostle communicates, that faith may be dead; that this sublime principle is subject to mortality, and that death may have passed upon it as well as upon all the affections and powers of man. Faith without works is dead—works are the proofs that faith is living—as thought or motion are the proofs of life in the being who thinks or moves—so works are the proofs of life in the faith which originates them. But are they necessary only as proofs? Most

assuredly, their utility is greater than merely the furnishing evidence. They not only prove our faith, but they, by exercise, stablsh and strengthen it. Without them, we not only have no proof that our faith lives, but we neglect the means appointed to keep it alive.

This doctrine that faith may be dead, is a very important truth to have communicated, because it has a directly practical tendency. If faith as well as other qualities may decay, it, as well as others, requires exercise to keep its influence alive. We know perfectly well, that every thing human languishes and decays, if suffered to remain in a state of inaction; we know that strength of body and strength of mind both require exercise for their continuance; we know that every sense we possess, by judicious exercise acquires increased power, and that when unexercised, its power invariably declines—the doctrine of my text informs us that it is thus with faith also. But the importance of such a doctrine will be made still more apparent, by comparing faith with other internal affections. The affections of the human mind we may consider so many springs, by which the business of life is carried on—to call them springs, does not certainly appear favourable to the argument I am endeavouring to unfold, because, perhaps,

the more all kinds of springs are exercised, the more they (not increase but) diminish in force. However, there is this agreement, that both that in the mind, and those in mechanical contrivances, may lose their power through disuse. But with respect to the mind, we consider the affections as springs which set it in action, and although repeated and long continued exercise may weaken them, yet it so attempers the mind as that a weaker impulse will be competent to move it. I will take an instance, which a distinguished philosopher has adduced to illustrate these principles.

The object of pity for the distresses of others, we can have no difficulty in understanding—namely, that it was intended to excite us to relieve the distresses we might witness, and to form us in habits of benevolence. Now, while distress is new to us, the sense of compassion is so poignant as frequently to occasion pain, and perhaps to render the person who feels it strongly unable to administer relief to the sufferer's wants or pains. This poignancy, however, wears off, and when the mind has been long familiarized to scenes of affliction, they lose the power which they originally possessed to afflict or to agitate. But then we may have passed through various afflicting scenes in two different ways. We may have obeyed the

impulse of pity and given relief, or we may have resisted such an influence, and suffered distress and misery to present themselves before us, and even to impress our hearts, without permitting them to produce in us any thing more than a barren feeling, in the spirit of which we will not perform an act of benevolence.

According to these different habits, two different characters will be produced—the one, of those who, in scenes of suffering, maintain a presence of mind which enables them to act in the best manner, and whose habits are such as that they can without an effort now, deny themselves, for the sake of having the power to comfort the sorrowful in their necessity—the other, of those who have suffered the feeling which God implanted in their hearts, to decay, without forming the habits of benevolence upon which its continued operation would be needless, and who no longer feeling painfully for distress, and having no inclination to relieve it, are now, in consequence of their resisting the influence of pity while it had power to operate—that is, in consequence of denying works to their feelings, selfish and hard-hearted.

Now, if the feelings which belong to this world, and which are natural to us, require

proper exercise, in order to their serving the purposes for which they were destined—how much greater attention must the principle of faith require? May I not assert, that this is a principle foreign from our nature—that it is an exotic; and if the qualities which are born with us, go to ruin in the very soil out of which they naturally spring, what great care and attention must it require (and in what a spirit of fear and trembling) to rear and protect this new principle, whose root may draw no nurture from earthly things, and which the atmosphere of an ungodly world has a tendency to wither. And yet, it is among earthly things that it is to grow, and it is in the atmosphere of such a world that it is to spread abroad its branches; and the very same circumstances which constitute its danger, may be converted into means by which it shall be quickened, strengthened, stablished.

Let us suppose, that there is lodged in the heart of a man a true faith in Christ—the natural result would be, that his works should correspond with his belief, and that he will deny his appetites, and moderate his desires, and regulate all his affections, in such a manner as to make his life an illustration of his principles. Now, it is evident, that the power of his faith will be increasing, according as it

is thus successfully exercised. Every victory it gains over some darling affection, or some tempting sin—every triumph it wins over any sordid or narrow interest, will add to its power—it will be gaining over gradually to its own interest and its own views, all those forces in the heart of man, which he had lately given as auxiliaries to the passions within him, and the temptations which continually surround him.

It will be, (to return to our former metaphor,) as if a new principle implanted in the heart attracted to itself all the nourishment which was before given to support the affections and passions belonging to this world, and which shall, henceforth, derive their nurture from a soil which this new principle has first exhausted and then renovated, increasing its power, and changing its nature from sin to holiness. But if, instead of consulting for the well-being of this new agent, the strength of the unchanged mind is occupied rather in thwarting and impairing it—if the nourishment which it would attract from the heart be diverted to minister to corrupt affections—then, where are the reasonable grounds for hope, that a principle which we continually oppose shall triumph, that a principle to which we will give no nourishment, shall continue to

live, though we deny it every thing upon which life depends. No, my brethren, be firmly convinced, that as faith, when it has totally ceased to operate is dead, so, if its operations be constantly resisted or feebly supported, it will die.

Ask yourselves then, are your works such as to strengthen your faith—or is your faith weak, because your works are few? Your hopes of Heaven must rest upon your faith, but faith requires works for its support. What is the reason why our faith in the world where we live is so strong? Because we are continually exercised in the works of it—because our senses are impressed by its appearances, and our passions agitated by its excitements, and our minds engaged about its interests. Learn wisdom from the children of this world. Let the powers in us which belong to God derive instruction from our inferior nature, and then we shall have faith in God established within us, firm as is our faith in the world. Have we not on record, even in times which we may call modern, and in our own country, a splendid instance of this triumphant faith, in the case of that great and Christian Philosopher, who, from deep meditation upon sublime things, had so strengthened by exercise his spiritual faculties,

that the presence of God was ever in his thoughts; and so far was he from being distracted by things of sense, that he looked upon this infinite and glorious creation, as the majestic and beautiful language in which God was continually addressing himself to his intelligent creatures.

If without adopting all this great man's opinions, we were influenced by a similar spirit, how mighty an assistant to our faith could we make its greatest enemy become—converting the world which seems that which separates us from God, into a means of communication with *him*.—How changed would every thing then become, when it was seen in the light of a pure and steady faith. In this world, naturally, all savours of death—our affections, our cares, our hopes, our disappointments, inform us that death has come into the world. Amidst all that bears the impress of this gloomy power, and under its fearful shadow, your faith is to grow—and when it has gained strength and maturity, it will be so visited with lights and airs from the Heaven to which it belongs, that the glooms and vapours of death shall be altogether dissipated or, at least, wonderfully relieved—that care shall lose its bitterness, and affection its alarm, and hope its insecurity, and death its victory.

This world will put on a new appearance, and the business in which we are employed, or the pleasures which tempt us, or the afflictions in which we are tried, shall appear what they are, visitations from God, commissioned for an appointed time to execute his commands. But still it is among the influences of death: faith is to grow, and, accordingly, without exercise and vigilance, it may imbibe such influences and perish. What is the purport of that beautiful parable of the wise virgins and the foolish, but to impress upon us the duty of keeping our faith alive by supplying it constantly from our works. All go forth with their lamps, or with faith to direct them, but some neglect the appointed means to keep their lights burning, and are directed to those who sell—that is, they are directed to go to the means appointed, where their own exertions, had they been timely, would have been blessed, and God would have granted to them the aliment for their faith—that purchase without money and without price, of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks.

And what are those means appointed by God to keep our faith alive, the neglect of which will cause its decay? They are the duties which devolve upon us, from the relations in which we stand, towards God and

charity loses its vagueness, and becomes a true exercise of faith, when he who ministers to his brother's wants, sees in the sufferer a ransomed creature of Christ, when he beholds him precious for the price at which he was bought, and knows that the Saviour who redeemed him, sends him as his own representative to all who have the power to relieve. "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these little ones, ye have done it to me."

May God grant that we may be greeted at the judgment day with this acknowledgment—that we may employ ourselves assiduously in the cultivation of a true and lively faith—that through its influence our works may become pure, and that from works so purified, our faith may increase in strength continually.—Then shall we while we sojourn in this perilous world, find that its power over us is continually decaying, and, as we every day draw nearer to the grave, that we are every day becoming more prepared to pass through it. Then shall the holy dispositions which are to render us meet for Heaven, be daily becoming more pure and less encumbered—then shall all those passions which belong to earth, and which constitute much of its misery, be becoming more and more obedient to the heavenly prin-

languish, if we thus neglect procuring for it the most powerful support we can command. This is the great doctrine—Christ crucified;—which most effectually conquers stubborn hearts—it is the doctrine which disenchants the world. What delusion—what deception can withstand it? What pleasures, or what embarrassments, or what afflictions can resist that glorious conviction in the heart—that Christ has died and has risen from the dead. This is the conviction, which kept alive by constant meditation, will overcome the world—how great, therefore, is our misfortune, if we neglect the means appointed for strengthening it, the frequent and faithful study of God's holy word. It is by this study, also, that we can most effectually make our avocations in the world conduce to the strengthening of our faith. We see that the world puts on a new appearance to those whose faith in Christ is strong. It is under the light of this faith that we really recognise all mankind as our brethren. It is under this light that the sorrows of our afflicted fellow-creatures are not merely recommended to the benevolent instincts of our nature, but are received as so many visitations by which God addresses himself to our hearts, and would prove our gratitude. Thus it is that



SERMON XI.

Job v. 7.

“MAN IS BORN TO TROUBLE, AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD.”

THERE are few of us to whom, at one period or another, the truth of these words has not been brought home by melancholy experience. One of the first things which strikes the observing mind, in comparing the condition of the human species with that of the other animals, is, the singular degree in which we are placed in each other's power, and our respective happiness or misery made to depend on our mutual conduct. And we cannot seriously dwell upon this peculiarity, in the character and circumstances of our race, without discovering that the wise and gracious Lord has so ordered it, for the wisest and most gracious purposes.

Is this world man's abiding place? Does his destiny reach no higher than a sovereignty over this earth, upon which we tread? Go

what appears to be true, such belief may go but a very short way in determining us to do what appears to be reasonable. And hence, the variance between profession and practice, between principle and conduct, which appears in the world. And hence, the necessity for some more pressing and operative motives than those of mere abstract reason and conviction, to compel such an attention to the truths of our divine religion, as may make its efficacy savingly felt, and give us experimental knowledge that the law of the Lord is pure, converting the soul, as well as that the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple.

Our Christian duty may be briefly comprehended in these two commandments, to love God above all things, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. The first is at variance with every thing impure; the second, with every thing selfish. And if this world were so ordered, as that we could secure to ourselves uninterrupted happiness, by the gratification of our impure propensities, and the indulgence of our selfish affections, the simple consideration of our duty to God would have little practical effect upon our lives. *But it is ordered otherwise.* Man does not find uninterrupted happiness in those pursuits, which

would lure him from the straight and onward course of religion. He soon finds disgust and weariness, disappointment and misery, vanity and vexation of spirit, in every thing which would lead him from his God. Want, and disease, and affliction, are the ministers by which his worldly-mindedness is corrected and chastised. As the stars appear when the sun goes down, so the mild and unobtrusive truths of our divine religion begin to dawn upon his mind, when the glare of this world's attractions has been darkened by the shadow of calamity. He begins to feel that he has an immortal soul. Knowing what it is to be a sufferer himself, he learns to sympathise with the sufferings of others. He recognises in the discipline to which he has been subjected, the hand of him who chastens whom he loves, even as a father the child of his love, and feels a constraining mercifulness in even the severest of his dispensations. And he thus learns to adore the wisdom of Providence, in furnishing him with motives and inducements to enter upon and persevere in a course of holiness, which the mere consideration of duty alone could never have sufficiently recommended to his adoption. He feels that it was good for him to have been afflicted, because he has thus been led to the knowledge

and ask of the enlightened heathens, who were left to the light of reason, and they will tell you, almost in the words of the Apostle, that if the hopes and aspirings of the human soul are to be bounded by the grave, we are of all creatures the most miserable. But what reason could merely conjecture, revelation has ascertained. And we are now assured, by the unerring oracle, that this world really is what it seems to be, a passing stage for the discipline and improvement of beings destined for another existence. Upon this supposition, every thing is harmonious and complete; suitable to the nature of man, and not unworthy the wisdom of the Most High. Upon any other supposition, limiting our hopes or repressing our aspirings, we may search in vain for any principle which will reconcile us to the common lot of humanity, or vindicate the ways of God to man.

But it is one thing to theorise soberly and rationally upon this wondrous plan of Providence, and another, to apply the truth which is thus recognised, practically to ourselves. It is one thing to have a general conviction that all the pains and pleasures which are our lot here below, are intended for our moral discipline; and another, to make such a use of this knowledge as may really conduce to our

moral improvement. How many are there who believe in a righteous and retributive Providence, who yet remain satisfied with this cold homage of the understanding to the great God, and suffer themselves to be as completely engrossed by the little interests of this life, as if they were never to be called to another, in which, according to the deeds done in the flesh, they will receive their recompense either of honour or condemnation? How many are there whose heads are convinced, while their hearts are unconverted; whose clear and unclouded reason would revolt from the monstrous notion, that death is an eternal sleep; but yet whose views, to all practical purposes, seem narrowed and circumscribed within the limits of the present existence? And this, my friends, because, to judge aright of any proposition depends not upon the will; the mind must necessarily be determined by the evidence as it appears before it. But, to cultivate in ourselves those dispositions and affections which lead to righteousness and true holiness—*this* is purely a voluntary exercise. And, in this consists our moral responsibility, that we are at liberty to act or not to act upon the suggestions of our reason and conscience. It therefore happens, that while we cannot help believing

It is thus, that we discover a beauty and propriety in what at a first glance may have appeared a blemish and an imperfection in the providential government. God's dealings with us have their chiefest reference to the purification of our hearts and minds, and the development of our faculties and affections. As far as these ends are produced, the purposes of his providence are answered. As far as they are not produced, we frustrate his gracious intentions, and our own blindness and obstinacy are in fault. But his object vindicates his goodness. His means approve his wisdom. And any failure on our part to reach the prize of our high calling, towards the attainment of which there is every thing to stimulate and to encourage us that should influence moral and reasonable creatures, only proves that fatal predominance of the animal over the spiritual part of our nature, which brought condemnation on the first man, and, as its consequences, entailed a curse and a punishment upon his posterity.

We see then, my friends, that important as is the duty of relieving the distressed, it is subordinate to the still more important one of purifying our own hearts and minds, and renewing a right spirit within us. Indeed, it is only as the former is subservient to the latter

of these duties, that it can be religiously commended. For it is then only, that it truly partakes of the nature of charity; and the holy Apostle tell us, that "though we give all our goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, we are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

We must consider the poor and the afflicted, then, as sent into this world for our discipline and improvement. It was with this view that the Lord of Hosts declared to the Jewish nation, that the poor should never depart out of the land. And if we consider those who are weighed down by poverty or wasted by disease, as in some measure exposed to these evils *for our sakes*, with what kindly and generous alacrity should we not interpose to afford relief or administer consolation? If our good form any part of the cause why they suffer, are we not bound to sympathise with, and to lighten their sufferings? But if there be any truth in the conclusions to be derived from a careful study of God's word, and an attentive observation of his providence, this is actually the case. It is not more certain that the sun has been placed in the firmament for the purpose of giving light and heat, than that evil and misery are permitted in the world for the purpose of eliciting philanthropy and benevolence. The objects then, for whose

relief we are solicited, must be admitted to have a double claim upon us. The sufferings to which they are subjected, for their own and our improvement, give them a title to be considered in the light of benefactors; and they demand our gratitude even while they supplicate our commiseration.

Yes, my friends, demand our gratitude. For if we are grateful to God for the blessings which he has bestowed upon us, he himself requires that we should prove our gratitude by shewing mercy upon those from whom similar blessings have been withheld. Our expressions of thankfulness for the good things which have been given us are mere words, if our hearts do not overflow with kindness upon those who are desolate and in misery. These are they whom God has appointed to receive our free-will offerings for all the mercies which we have received at his hands. Hear his own gracious words—"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And when the righteous shall answer him saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee; or thirsty and gave thee drink; or when saw we thee a

stranger and took thee in ; or naked and clothed thee ; or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee ? ” then shall the King answer, and say unto them, “ Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my friends, ye did it unto me.”

Have we then any bowels of compassion towards our fellow-men, or any sentiment of gratitude towards God, if we withhold that liberal exercise of charity, which he has thus graciously promised to consider as done unto himself by imputation ? Can we be daily and hourly partaking of the largesses of his providence, without making the return which he requires at our hands ? Shall health, and peace, and friends, and happiness, be given and continued to us ; shall we be blessed with length of days, shall we see our sons grow up like the young plants, and our daughters like the polished corners of the temple, and shall our garners be full and plenteous with all manner of store, while yet we feel no pity for the thousands and tens of thousands of the sons and daughters of affliction, who are doomed to a far different lot, from whom all those blessings have been withheld which have been given us in such abundance ; and who are eating the bitter bread of poverty, or stretched upon the pallet of disease, or

following the hope or the stay of their families to an untimely grave? Shall we bask in the open sunshine of God's love, only to be hardened into an unfeeling neglect of the most earnest and impressive of his commandments? Shall his mercies descend upon us, like sunbeams upon the sandy desert, only to dry up and to wither every refreshing source of life and comfort? And shall this be without a consciousness on our part of offending against our Heavenly Father, and sinning against our own souls? No, my friends. You have already answered these questions. Far be from you this impious forgetfulness of the loving kindness of your God. We have only to look around us, and to behold the establishments which have been founded in your city for relieving indigence and succouring affliction, to be cheered by perceiving that you have recognised, and acted upon the principle which I am endeavouring to inculcate; and that instead of sacrificing hecatombs for the mercies which you have received, and making vain oblations of things which cannot profit, you have been shewing forth the praise of God, by affording shelter and protection to the lame, the blind, the aged, and the infirm, and visiting the afflicted heart with gladness, and causing the bones which were humbled to

rejoice, and bedewing the sightless countenance with tears of gratitude, and training up the youthful generation in the way they should go, and reclaiming the obstinate and abandoned sinner, and thus causing a jubilee of adoration to ascend towards the throne of God, which is more grateful than incense from a thousand altars.—Yes, my friends, it is a blessed work, when the lips that would otherwise be murmuring complaints, and the tongues that would otherwise be uttering blasphemies, have been brought by your instrumentality to recognize the glory of God, and to join the anthem of the choirs of heaven. It is, indeed, a blessed work, when we can compel, by the constraining bonds of love, aliens and strangers into the service of our Divine Master: when, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to convert profaneness into piety, and to turn sorrow into joy. For this is precisely what our blessed Lord would have us to be employed about. It is thus, that we best imitate him who went about doing good, and who came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance. It is thus alone that we can cause his kingdom to come, and his will to be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

When we compare the ancient with the modern world, not the least striking or in-

teresting feature of distinction which presents itself, consists in the superior degree in which, amongst us, the charitable propensities have been developed and purified, and charitable exertions extended and systematised. In ancient times, individuals were considered no further estimable than they were serviceable to the state ; and, in some countries it was regarded as a weakness to entertain any sentiment of pity for the decrepitude of old age, or the feebleness of unpromising childhood. Thank God, the same reproach does not belong to our times. The blessed influence of Christianity appears, perhaps, in nothing so remarkable, as in the contrast which, in this respect, the most unimproved portion of christendom presents to the refined capitals of the heathen world ; where those who might be abandoned to premature destruction by their natural parents, without reproach or remorse, would be adopted amongst us, as the children of the public, and considered only so much the more entitled to our pity and protection, as they were more helpless and unfriended.

This, then, is my answer to those who undervalue the blessings of Christianity, and sceptically ask what it has done for mankind ? Too frequently, indeed, it happens, that indi-

viduals exhibit in their conduct no very striking exemplification of the truth or the purity of our divine religion; and it may be difficult to shew in what respects it has made them better than heathens. But it rarely happens, that the same observation applies to any Christian community; and there is commonly evidenced so wide a distinction between the degree in which the charitable and benevolent principle has been developed in ancient and in modern times, as would in itself lead the candid and reflecting mind, to an acknowledgment of the divine origin of Christianity. In order to have a lively idea of the difference in this respect, between christendom and the most polished of these countries in which heathenism prevailed—you have only to imagine what the condition of your own city would be, if the public support were suddenly withdrawn from every one of its charitable institutions: if there were no retreats, no asylums, no fever hospitals, no house of industry, no schools, no institution for the deaf and dumb, no receptacle for lunatics, none of those various establishments for the benefit of the maimed, the blind, the aged, and the infirm, to be any longer supported by the bounty of the community. Suppose all these blessed establishments extinct, and you will

have *some* idea of what the condition, in this respect, of Rome, or Athens, or Sparta, actually was in the most favoured periods of their civilization. In order, however, to complete the picture, you should add, that they were not without their prisons, their work-houses, for the punishment or torture of slaves, and the inhuman practice of exposing feeble and destitute children to be devoured by wild beasts. Is it then too much to say, that a comparison of modern to ancient times, is like a comparison of light to darkness; that it is like comparing all that is *dæmoniac* in humanity, with all that is divine; man in his state of reprobation, with man in his state of redemption—man following the desires of the flesh, with man quickened by the operation of the Spirit? And even if we were disposed to confine our attention to this one point of comparison, does it not furnish abundant proof as well of what we are by nature, as of what we may become by grace; and suggest cause of fervent and perpetual gratitude, for the manner in which the Lord Jesus has rescued us from the tyranny of low and unruly instincts and propensities, and brought us out of darkness into the marvellous light of his gospel.

It is for us, then, my brethren, to consider

how far we have been individually contributing to produce this great and beneficial change in the world. The seed which was the smallest of all seeds has become a great tree, insomuch that the birds of heaven have found shelter in its branches. Our claim to the title of Christians is to be ascertained, in some measure, by the degree in which we have been instrumental in its cultivation.

The means with which you have been blessed by providence, have not been conferred upon you chiefly or primarily for your own sakes. You have not been raised above the heads of others, for the purpose of looking proudly down upon them from your elevation, and, while they are struggling with penury, feeling a double zest in the enjoyment of your comforts and luxuries. No man in his sober senses, whether he be or be not a believer in the Christian revelation, could entertain such a sentiment as this. What? That the great God confers wealth and power upon one class of individuals only to be squandered and abused upon purposes of selfish or criminal enjoyment! Such a sentiment is worse than foolish. It is impious—it is a libel upon Providence. No—the man who believes that he has an immortal soul, and that he is to live in another state of existence, will consider

the possession of riches a condition of very peculiar trial and responsibility. He will consider himself as occupying an important post in society, and called upon to lead the way in advancing the ends of his heavenly Master's benign and gracious dispensations. He will consider the day as having passed by unprofitably, during which he has not availed himself of some opportunity for promoting peace upon earth, and good will amongst men, and glory to God in the highest.

Indeed, my brethren, the advocate in a cause like this, labours under very peculiar disadvantages. You imagine that he is seeking to excite you to some great and extraordinary act, while he is only feebly endeavouring to inculcate your ordinary Christian duty. You come here, it may be, on your guard against what you are pleased to call the eloquence and the exaggeration of the preacher; whereas, if you felt as you ought, you would acknowledge that his strongest language was but a tame conveyance of truths that should never have been absent from your hearts. When we tell you that the widow and the fatherless are here soliciting some little charitable consideration from you, who have been so bountifully considered by your heavenly Father, do we make any

statement that is extravagant, do we prefer any claim that is unjust? Are you afraid of being called to account before God, for having subtracted some little sum from your accustomed luxuries? Will God be displeased, think you, at the multiplication or support of those charitable institutions for relieving indigence, succouring affliction, and training up the youthful generation in the way they should go? My brethren, are you believers? Has the law of God been written in vain upon your hearts? Has the word of God been recorded in vain in the Book of Life for your edification? And shall the preacher be charged with exaggeration, when he presses the plainest and most momentous truths which it conveys upon your attention, and encourages you to do what God approves, and intreats you to do what God commands, and calls upon you, who are awfully elevated above your fellow-men in the scale of society, to have some touch of sympathy for the heart-searching misery and destitution to which they are exposed, and to be merciful even as your Father who is in heaven is merciful? Alas! my brethren, how careless and indifferent are we to the knowledge of divine things! How reluctant is the admission of those truths, and how irksome the performance of those duties which

diminish our complacency, or disturb our selfishness! And what a contrast is presented in this respect, between what we know of human, and what we are taught concerning the angelic nature! The natural man, when raised to wealth and distinction, knows little and cares less for the wretchedness of those below him. The spiritual messengers of God make it their business and find it their pleasure to be active in their good offices towards the afflicted and miserable children of men. "Are they not," says the holy Apostle, "ministering spirits, sent to minister unto them that are the heirs of life." Man is estranged from man by want and misery. But it is want and misery that attracts the protection and engages the sympathy of angels. What disgusts and alienates his fellow-mortal in this world, draws down the benign regards of purer and more blessed intelligences in the other. He is spurned upon earth for what he is beloved in heaven. Fear not, then, ye poor children of affliction, whose portion here is gall and bitterness. Your sufferings are not unnumbered. What, though you may be left to pine in wretchedness by those who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fare sumptuously every day, there are other higher and purer creatures, whose office it is to be

ministers unto you for good; whose constant endeavour it is either to relieve or to sanctify your sufferings; either to bring them to an happy issue here, or cause them to be productive of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory hereafter. Fear not, then, neither repine under the calamities with which you have been visited—if you are forgotten by men, you are remembered by angels—your privations here, no doubt, are great—but the end draweth nigh—and if with patience ye possess your souls, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

And why is it that celestial natures are thus occupied in works of love towards creatures of a baser mould? Why is it that the Creator of heaven and earth is thus graciously mindful of the inhabitants of this lower world—

“That blessed angels he sends to and fro,

“To wait on guilty man, on guilty man his foe?”

Because, my brethren, of the immense importance of the human soul—because God has endued us with a principle of immortality, and angels recognize us as the embryo inhabitants of heaven.—Because, how humble soever our origin, and how lowly soever our present state, they look forward to that period when time shall be no more—when we shall share with them in the glories of eternity—

and be thought worthy of circling the presence of the adorable one, with song and everlasting joy upon our heads, singing, "blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." They have a clear and distinct perception of all this. Faith has with them ripened into knowledge. The same confident expectation that a father has of the manhood of his child, higher and purer creatures entertain of those ulterior stages of being which commence after mortality. And therefore it is, that a father is not more anxious to make provision for his child's future welfare, than they are solicitous for the eternal well-being of those who are to be their co-heirs of life and immortality. The loathsome and forlorn being who is laid at our gates full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fall from our tables, full often they recognize, under his disguise of misery, as one possessed of a peace and a joy in believing, which the world can neither give nor take away, and patiently awaiting his deliverance from the body, that he may be with them in paradise.

Therefore it is, that there is joy amongst the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth—and not amongst them only—it is

felt, in its degree, *by all who have attained to any faint resemblance of them either in faith or in purity.* We, indeed, cannot expect to attain in this life to their perfection of spiritual discernment. While we are in the flesh we must be content “to see as through a glass darkly.” But, according to our measure of faith in the promises, and obedience to the precepts of God, will we be like-minded as they are towards all our brethren in Christ Jesus.

The first thing which the real Christian learns, is the value of the immortal soul—the next, the enormous guilt of sin, and the ruin and misery which it has brought upon the world—he will learn these two things by the purchase which has been paid for our redemption—“hereby know we the love of God towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” When these truths have taken root in his heart, it is impossible that they should remain unproductive. He will continually remember his Lord’s words—“a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” He cannot see a little child straying about in destitution and wretchedness, and exposed to the temptations of want and misery, without considering that for him Christ died. He cannot behold a sinner heedlessly

proceeding in the paths of ungodliness, without attempting to reclaim him from the error of his ways, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham.

And this sensibility to the dangers of their perilous and forlorn condition, proceeds not from a wayward sentimentalism, such as might be excited by a tale of fictitious distress, but is the result of a deeply-seated conviction of the inevitable misery which lies before them.—“God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he promised and shall he not perform—hath he purposed, and shall he not make it good?” These are, with real believers, no sounding words—they never resolve this solemn declaration of the unchangeable nature of the divine decrees into boastful and empty phraseology. They consider it literally and emphatically descriptive of the irreversible nature of the condemnation of those who resolve to live and die in their wickedness;—and the reality of this deep conviction thus impressed upon their minds, appears from their persevering and systematic exertions for the salvation of themselves and others. This is the true, and, indeed, the only test of a settled religious persuasion, concerning the decrees and the counsels of God. The benevolence

ere human good nature
 ready—that which flows
 actual piety, is perma-
 nt—the one varies accord-
 temper or spirits—the other is
 ble and serene. The one is com-
 ted by vanity, quickened by com-
 and directed by fashion—and is ever
 to be chilled by age, repressed by ri-
 ale, or soured by disappointment. The
 ner seeketh not the praise or the notice of
 men—it letteth not the right hand know what
 the left hand doeth, and endeavoureth to be
 as secret and unobserved, as it is genial and
 constant. The one is frequently overcome by
 evil—the other always overcomes evil by
 good. In a word, the one is a principle of
 worth implanted within us, always modified
 and frequently counteracted by the evil with
 which it is united—the other is a principle of
 purity communicated to us, which overmasters
 and subdues our bad propensities, and vindi-
 cates, both in its nature and influence, its divine
 origin, in that it is a never-ceasing incentive
 to good works, and is the same “yesterday,
 to-day, and for ever.”

Oh! that it might now be felt stirring in the
 bosoms of those who hear me, and moving
 them to offer some token of their love and

sympathy to their poor fellow-sinners who stand here feebly supplicating their commiseration! Alas! Age and misery are hard task-masters. Is it because you have not experienced them yourselves, that you can afford no pity to those who are bearing the double burden of poverty and years? May you, my beloved brethren, be for ever shielded from all adversity. May your prosperity be founded upon a rock, and no affliction come nigh you. But there was, perhaps, a time when the suppliants now before you, as little expected any such reverse—as little apprehended that they should ever have to encounter this bitter hour of anxiety and humiliation. And you cannot, indeed, be ignorant, that there are daily occurring, in the regions of fashion and of folly, affecting instances of the instability of fortune, (where Providence, by visible judgments, arrests the offender in the career of his iniquity) which, the man who has been seduced by the illusions of prosperity, must not only be destitute of goodness and of grace, but of reason and reflection, not to be startled by, and awakened to a sense of the necessity of seeking, in this most perilous world, for some more secure rock of defence, in this most calamitous world, for some more abiding consolation. Anticipate, then, those lessons of wisdom,

leading to the works of mercy, which Providence so frequently finds it necessary to teach by heart-rending and melancholy experience. The poor creatures whom you see before you once had husbands, whose labour sustained them in comfort and independence—but the grave has long since closed upon their mortal remains. Children, but they are either absent or no more;—some of them, perhaps, serving in distant lands;—some, perhaps, having fallen the victims of war, fighting the battles of their country:

“All gone! all vanished! they deprived and bare;
How shall they face the remnant of their age?
What will become of them?”

But heaven is gracious. God has raised up friends and protectors, who will be to them instead of the dear and precious relatives who have departed. Upon you, my brethren, devolves the blessed work of thus administering divinest consolation; of acting, in some measure, as the ambassadors of Providence, and banishing woe from the presence of the aged mourner—

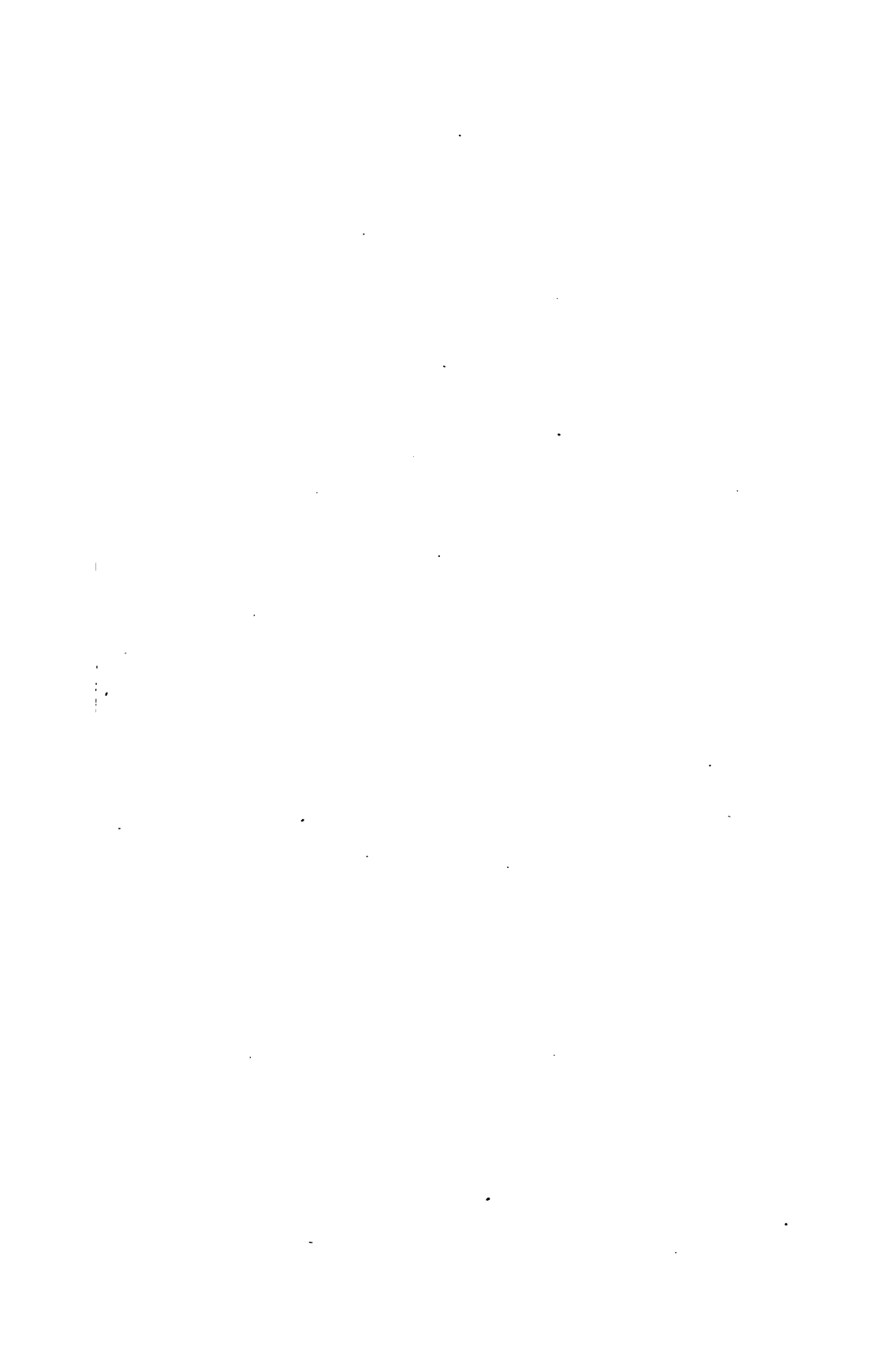
*“Like that working Heaven, inspiring us
The lonely heart with merciful good.”*

And in being placed in this position,
and called upon to perform this service, are
you not, indeed, highly favoured? The same

God who has given you the means, now gives you the opportunity of being merciful. Alas! it is but a little thing which your poor afflicted fellow-creatures, who stand here, require of you. No luxuries—no comforts—not even fire or shelter—but bread, just to support life—and clothing, just to shield them from the inclemency of winter. Look upon them, and tell me, are you prepared to say, in the presence of your Saviour, that you suffered the burden of poverty to press upon their aged shoulders, until it brought down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?

But if, witnessing such a case, you could withhold your aid, you would be even more pitiable objects than those whom you left to perish—for death would soon release them from their misery, and, perhaps, make them one with their Saviour. But you—you would be cursed with hard hearts—and, as you disobeyed the commands of God, should live in the eye of his displeasure. Are you prepared for this? Are you prepared to sink into a luxurious indulgence, and shut the ears of your hearts against the cries of the wretched in this their utter extremity, while you yet expect that the Lord will graciously hear you, when you call upon him for a continuance of those blessings by which you have been so abun-

dantly favoured? For, what have you that he has not given you, and which he may not again resume? Will you say, that your prosperity is all your own desert—that you are not accountable for the use of your possessions? Oh! be timely wise. Let no such impious thoughts assail you. Acknowledge that all is the gift of God—of that God who will not be worshipped by empty external acts—who will have mercy and not sacrifice. And as you value his blessings—as you reverence his laws—as you hope for his favour—as you dread his judgments—prove yourselves careful and diligent in the stewardship to which he has appointed you;—be occupied in works of mercy—be instant in affording aid to the indigent—in speaking comfort to the afflicted, and in binding up the broken heart; and the good favour of your God will be with you, and the blessing of the poor will descend upon you, and the holy angels will look down rejoicing upon your work, and when you fail, they will receive you into everlasting habitations.



SERMON XII.

Rom. xii. 20.

"THEREFORE, IF THINE ENEMY HUNGER, FEED HIM; IF HE THIRST, GIVE HIM DRINK; FOR, IN SO DOING, THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD."

THESE words are quoted literally by the Apostle Paul, from the 25th chapter of the Book of Proverbs, and afford a signal evidence that the same Divine Spirit which inspired the author of this epistle, spoke also to the understanding, and to the heart of him who wrote that truly profound book. For the sentiment contained in these words, forms a distinguishing and characteristic feature of that mind, and of that morality which God only enlightens and approves, whilst it passes a repeal on such rigorous precepts as "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," which was the decision, not only of retributive justice under the Mosaic law, (accommodated as that law was to the hardness of the human heart) but which

is more or less, the natural propensity, and the serious intention of every heart, which the exhortation in the text has not brought under its benign influence. Nor is this exhortation confined to the negative prohibition of forbearing to retaliate. It does not merely soften down the severity of feelings, which might plead a sort of justification in the unprovoked injuries that may have excited them, or in the repeated aggravations they may have endured. It makes no stipulation in behalf of insulted honour, nor any compromise for the indulgence of a little wrath. But forbidding every limitation to generosity, it nobly transcends those barriers beyond which, the pride and the selfishness, and the vindictive temper of our fallen nature would seldom permit any of us to pass, and silencing every rising opposition of the heart, it teaches us to look upon our enemies with the eyes and with the compassion of a friend, when circumstances arise by which they may be recommended to our commiseration, and to our relief ;—" if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink." What a world would this wicked world become, did all who call themselves Christians, and who profess to take the word of God for the rule of their conduct, act in a manner thus worthy of such a word,

and of such a rule ! Enmities and wrath, and strife, would cease, whilst the return of good for evil would finally produce a reciprocity of good ! And we are assured, that thus it shall be before this world has fulfilled the great destiny towards which it is in progress, when, (as the Prophet Isaiah most eloquently expressed it,) “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion and fatling together, and a little child shall lead them ;”—when “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord.” Men, more hostile and unrelenting, and unforgiving towards their fellow-men, than are the beasts of the field, which a blind instinct exasperates, shall all partake of the same kind and gentle nature ; and the earth which they inhabit, no longer under curse, shall be called “the holy mountain of the Lord.” This is that happy period, which, in scholastic theology, is called the millenium, or the thousand years of an earthly paradise, but which, in Scripture language, designates only a long space of time to commence at an appointed season, previous to the dissolution of this present world. And how is this great change to be effected ? This also, is distinctly mentioned by the Prophet, “for, the earth,” says

he, "shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." It is "the knowledge of the Lord," or the general prevalence of Christian truth "which shall perform this."

My Christian friends, we may lay it down as a maxim, or self-evident truth, that the instrument by which the Lord effects any thing, at any time, is equally powerful in *his* hand, to do the same thing, at all times. It is not surprising then, that although the instances of its effectual operation may be rare, the precept in the text should even now have some to respect it, and some to obey it, and that moral actions, more especially of this nature, should find, in the religion of Christ, their appropriate and most powerful, and in many instances, their only support. I shall proceed to illustrate this important truth, in the case before us. We are here enjoined to give meat and drink even to an enemy suffering under the want of both these primary necessities of life, "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink," and to this is annexed what may at first sight, and in its obvious import, appear a motive little suited to such an end, "for, in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

There is, however, in the text, though it is

not so directly expressed, a previous motive which contains a more immediate and personal obligation to the same duty. It is to be found in the Christian contemplation of the word "enemy." The Apostle is here exhorting the persons to whom he wrote, to humility, to brotherly love, and finally, that "as much as in them lay," they should "live peaceably with all men." He had been "beseeching" them to do so, "by the mercies of God" manifested to themselves, "*in that while*" they "were yet sinners, and ungodly and enemies, Christ died for" them. Now, suppose this most illustrious instance of Divine love, to have made a due impression on the heart of any man, and to have led him, as, in such a case, it naturally would lead him, to reason seriously on the character and condition of those enemies, for whom the Scriptures inform us that Christ died, and what would be the consequence? Would it not be the conviction, and the consciousness of his own share in the general accusation? Would it not be the abasing recollection of those numerous instances of neglect, of provocation, and of enmity, by which he had himself shewn his insensibility, and his ingratitude to the exceeding great love and mercy of his God? And would not convictions so solemn and so just, as these ~~new~~

sarily lead him to associate with the word "enemy," (more especially when he himself became an unmerited sufferer from any enemy) his own right and title to the same appellation? For standing, as he does, between God, his greatest benefactor, on the one hand, and man, let it be *even* his greatest enemy on the other, can it escape him that the most unprovoked and cruel injuries he can sustain at the hand of any fellow-creature, bear not the most distant comparison, in point of offence, with what may appear the most trifling sin he has himself committed against the holy and spiritual law of that glorious Being, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity!" To what extent can human "envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness" make him suffer, in comparison of what he should suffer, were God to "enter into judgment with himself for the very same?" And when this awful contrast is further aggravated, by the consideration, that it is in our own breasts we should often search for the cause of much of the enmity we impute to others; for the resentment, or the impatience, or the intolerance of our wounded pride; for that spirit of retaliation, and that resistance to conciliation, which we sometimes maintain, even when overtures of peace are made to us by a penitent offender.

When we lay these things to heart, and view the matter in this light, how greatly must it mitigate the offence of our greatest enemy ;— what a different complexion must his transgression assume—how much of our sympathy should he share—and how small a portion of our wrath should remain for him, when we contemplate our own concern in the business, and weigh the utmost that could be said in our favour, against all the wrath that might so justly be treasured up against ourselves at the judgment of the great day ? Can such a solemn personal account as this leave any room for hatred of others in our breasts ? Or, can a sense of deserved wrath, at the hand of God, consistently co-exist with the desire to avenge private wrongs so comparatively small ? Surely, every such desire must subside, and be annihilated in the consciousness of that commiseration, and mercy, and forbearance, which we ourselves daily experience in our much more awful state of enmity against God!—and the endeavour to promote peace on earth, must naturally flow from our desire, and our hope of obtaining peace with Heaven !

These few observations form a needful preliminary to the precept in the text.—For, before we can do good to an enemy in the true

spirit of the gospel, we must cease from wrath against him ;—we must “forgive him from our hearts, his trespasses against us.” And having thus obtained a victory over ourselves, not less arduous than it is necessary, we shall find this precept to attract our notice in a very peculiar manner. For, if to “feed” those who “hunger,” and “give drink” to those who “thirst,” be in general the dictate of humanity, as well as a prime duty of the Christian life, how vastly must the luxury of doing good be heightened by the consideration that even an “enemy” is the object of it?—If magnanimity can be ascribed to this peaceful and retired virtue, where the “left hand” is not to “know” what “the right hand doeth ;” surely it is here !—If an evidence is to be had of unusual self-command, of subdued character, of vanquished pride, and of a serene and heavenly spirit—surely it is here !—And if, of the things done in the body, a memorial is to ascend before the tribunal of Christ, at the awful investigation of the last great day, what shall be so prominent—what shall carry with it such a solemn and genuine emphasis, as that obedience to the law of Christ, “do good to them that hate you,” combined, as far as it can go, with the imitation of the life of Christ, who prayed for mercy even on

his murderers:—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" In the instance now before us, the very same good might be done by many in the world, from many different motives, and "the hungry," and "the thirsty," as far as may concern their temporal wants, equally profit by it; but suffer me to request your serious attention to this important truth, that no other motive to do such good, than that which has first eradicated enmity from the heart, will reverberate with saving effect upon the character of him who does it, nor bring him an immediate and substantial reward in the renovation of his own spirit, and of his own temper, and in the consolation that will not fail to accompany it, of having done what is right under the most forbidding circumstances, and in the face of a world which often brands such conduct with hypocrisy, and weakness, and pusillanimity, and which would give its sanction and applause to the very reverse.

But as the Apostle, in another place, exhorts us, "let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth," so whilst we seek and promote the highest improvement of our own souls, in the faithful practice of the precept in the text, we have reason to indulge a no ill-founded hope of extending the same blessing

to those very persons, whose temporal necessities we are there exhorted to relieve—"for, in so doing," says the Apostle, "thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." It is not the pressure of bodily distress that the Christian should be most anxious to remove. His most glorious office, and his most glorious reward lie in "turning many unto righteousness." And, in the present instance, how shall he be able to do this?—By the influence, and by the beauty of his example. In many other instances, he might shew equal kindness without attaining the same desirable end. He might relieve the distress of the stranger, the orphan and the widow, whom he had never known, and never seen, without awaking in them the smallest sense of right or wrong, or even of gratitude, and leave them in these respects, (as it too often happens) just as worthless as he found them. But when it is to an "enemy," to one who hates him, and who continues, perhaps, unrelenting in his hatred, that such generosity is extended;—when getting the better of his private feelings, and of every selfish affection, he is beheld hastening to the aid of such a person, as it were to an afflicted friend or brother;—how must the blush of shame glow in the face of that enemy, at the painful recollection of hav-

ing entertained, or of still persisting in his animosity;—how **must** he exchange his cold, and cheerless, and self-corroding malice, for the warmth of gratitude pervading his inmost soul; and how must the sense of such love and unmerited kindness, as it were, of “coals of fire” heaped “upon his head,” soften and melt down every opposition of his entire nature into reciprocal love and kindness towards *him* who could be so compassionate, and so liberal, and so magnanimous as to forgive and to forget every insult and every wrong, on beholding the distress and sorrow of the very man whom he had been mourning over, and whom the world would have acquitted him in rejoicing over, or, at least, in passing by as an alien and an “enemy!” Thus it is, that a truly Christian spirit can produce peace upon earth where peace was least to be expected; and that the coal which burned only for the excitement and the supply of the angry passions of greater hatred, and of more enduring strife, may be consecrated to the sacrifice of these most malignant passions of the mind.

I have now set before you one of the most difficult duties of the Christian code; one which involves the entire regulation of the Christian man—and one which (from the

conduct of the world at large) appears the most revolting to flesh and blood. It is no less than the *unnatural* duty of "love your enemies, do good to them which hate you—bless them which curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"—a duty which the infidel and the scoffer deny in principle as well as in practice. It is the painful duty, unknown to philosophy and to worldly wisdom, of "turning the left cheek," of "giving up a coat or a cloak," of being "reviled, and reviling not again," which is accounted folly, and pusillanimity, and cowardice, by all who "know not Christ," nor "the power of his resurrection, nor the fellowship of his sufferings;"—a duty which is questioned and softened down, and, at best, reckoned among the "hard sayings," difficult to "bear," even by some who profess Christ, but "who stop short in the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and seek not to "go on unto perfection." But to endeavour after perfection in this way is sound philosophy, "the wisdom of the simple," as far surpassing the "wisdom of the wise," as Christ and the little volume of "all he did and taught," excel the whole host of human sages, and all that has been ever written, said or printed, since the day he was first announced as the Saviour of

a sinful world. It would be, indeed, as contrary to common experience as to Scripture, to say that the compliance with this duty, or the pursuit of this perfection, depended on any mere human motives, however excellent; or that man is, of himself, sufficient to it. For, though he might proceed even so far as to admire and approve of such a glorious exhibition of all that is meek, and holy, and charitable as this is, yet it is a well-known fact, that the convictions of the understanding have, in all things spiritual, but little influence on the movements of the heart. The dissolution of such heavenly concord was one of the first effects of our ruin at the fall. And hence, the affections have ever since exercised a dominion over the reason, which they were at first formed and commanded to obey. For to approve and even to will "is" often "present" with us, when "how to perform that which "is good," we find not;—we seek not. Now, the great moral object of the Christian faith is to restore the entire man into harmony with himself—and this difficulty, however great, is not insurmountable. For it is the peculiarity of Christ's religion, that it prescribes us no duty, without supplying us also with ability to perform it. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "through Christ who strengtheneth me."

And lest this might be misinterpreted, as relating to the exercise of miraculous gifts, he accompanies it with the recital of several instances of moral obedience, and of self-command, in all of which, he acknowledges himself indebted to a higher power than his own. Here then is the great, the inexhaustible source whence every Christian is invited to draw freely. His strength is in the Lord, who "maketh even his enemies," as in the case before us, "to be at peace with him;" and "his grace is," at all times, and in all places, and under all circumstances, "sufficient for" him. With such mighty aid as this, what duty can be enjoined to us, provided God enjoins it, which we need fear to undertake? Or why should we stop at any inferior attainment, or fall behind in any good word or work? For as we have no inferior law to serve, so neither do we depend on any inferior help. The claims that are made upon us, and encouragements afforded to us, run parallel with each other. It is the law of God to which we are responsible, and it is also in the responsibility of God himself that we are taught to trust. To him we are invited to "commit" our "way," who has said that "he will bring it to pass."

And if these things are so, it may well be

asked, 'what makes the Christian life so rarely visible in those illustrious instances of it which we have been just contemplating?' It is our neglect of those great sources of life which God has been graciously pleased to open to us. And these, in the main, are two.—He has placed in our hands his revealed word ;—He offers to us the influence of his Holy Spirit. Now it is a fact, that we do not profit as we ought of these two great means of spiritual improvement ; and to this culpable inattention must be imputed the essential difference that prevails, between what has been well described as the nominal and the real Christian. For, whilst we vainly suppose that the rule of life which God prescribes does not exceed that low standard which we have erected for ourselves ;—while the narrow path is not yet discerned that diverges from the broad high-way in which the world runs ;—whilst we do not yet perceive how much the morality of the Gospel is at variance with these feelings, and forbids those practices in which our sensuality, our vanity, our pride, a worldly spirit, or any, our more malignant passions delight to indulge ;—so far, and so long the Bible is extolled as an admirable guide of human life. We are content to be Christians on such easy terms as these—but the moment

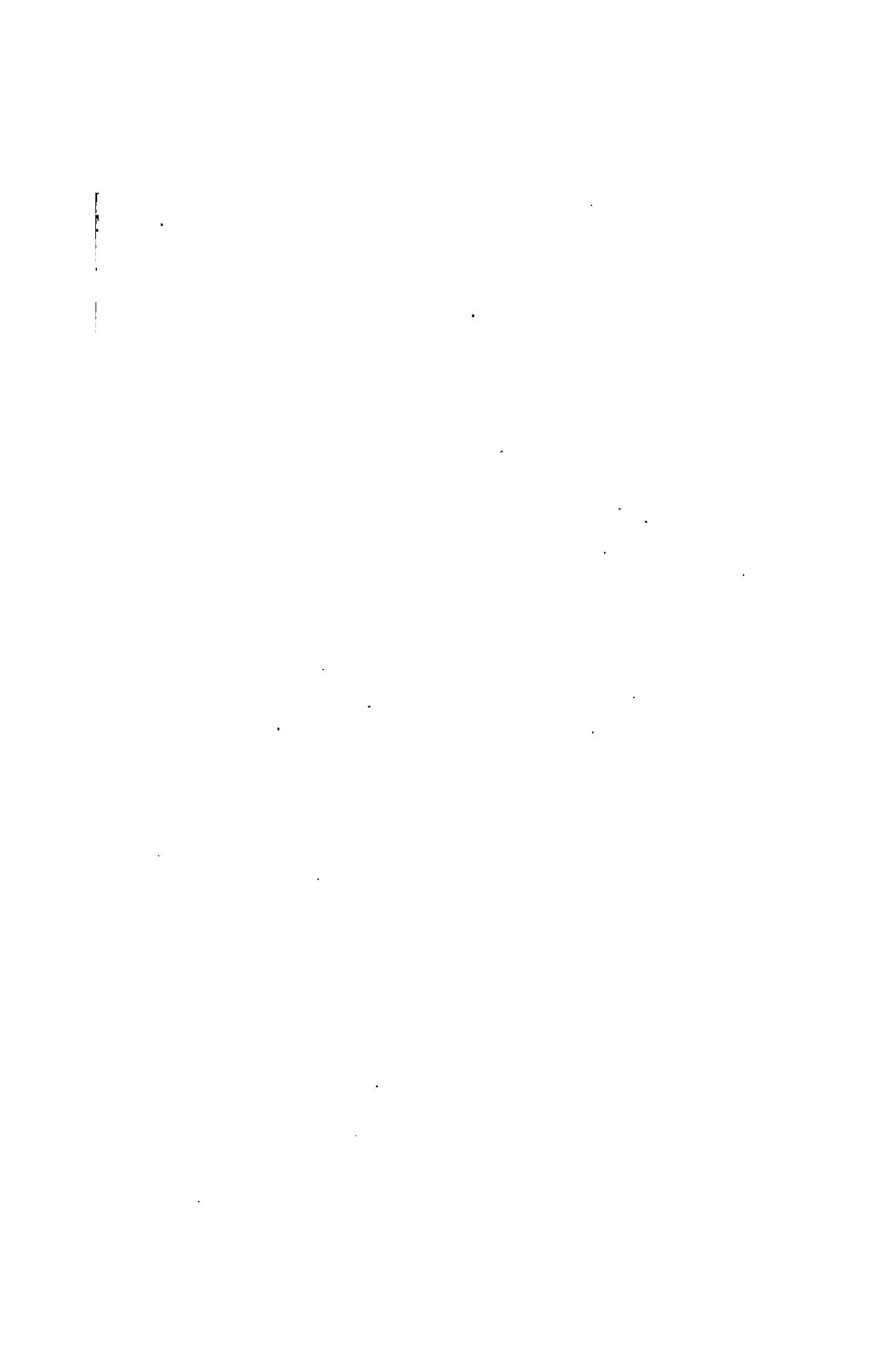
it is discovered that the Bible requires more or less of sacrifice, that Christians are marked out as a peculiar people ;—that the homage of the heart, of the whole heart is claimed ;—that duties repugnant to the corrupt desires of flesh and blood are enjoined ;—or, that circumstances may occur where all must be forsaken, and God alone obeyed ;—it is wonderful how much this sacred book falls in our estimation ;—how it is accused of unsuitable and intolerable severity, as being accommodated only to angelic natures, and as beyond the reach and obedience of imperfect man. Now, what do all these objections prove but a secret disbelief of the Bible ? For, if we really believed it, we should soon be led to acknowledge that it could not speak to us in a lower tone, nor propound to us a moral law on an inferior scale than what it does—and why ? Because God is the author of it, and because it would not be consistent with the excellence of his nature to give us a law but such as, like himself, is “ holy, just, and good,” free from all mixture, even of infirmity. Nor let it be objected, that with all the light which such a law affords us, and all the sanctions with which it is accompanied, it cannot be said that any man has ever kept it to perfection, and therefore, that such a law is ill adapted to us.

For we should carefully remember, that the only sort of ambition which is really permitted to us, and which we may indulge without the least danger of excess, is that which sets no bounds to our desires, and to our progress towards this very perfection. And though it is a perfection to which we can never specifically attain, opposed as it is by the contest, that to the last hour of our lives, shall exist within us, between the motions of nature and the suggestions of grace, yet it should never cease to be our great end and aim, ignorant as divine wisdom has designedly left us of what is necessary to fill up the measure of that faithful service, which he, "who knoweth the heart," and the various powers with which he has entrusted us, has reason to expect, and to require of us.

To what has been said, I shall only add, that little as we are, by nature, qualified or disposed to obey the precept in the text, nay, prone as we are to take offence, prompt to avenge, and slow to forgive—let us neither say that the Scriptures demand too much of us, when they require us to do good even to an enemy ;—nor that such a victory over self is impossible, until we have first made a fair experiment of the means which God has declared as sufficient to this end ;—recollecting

that it is "God who," by his holy word, and by his holy Spirit, "worketh in us," both "to will and to do of his good pleasure." In his works of grace, indeed, as in his works of nature, he acts in strict conformity with himself—few are the instances of sudden and miraculous interposition on either side. The child has its gradations towards the perfect man;—the seed, its seasons, from bud to stalk, and stem, and branch, 'till, at length, it overshadows with its expanded boughs the subject earth. And the seed of the word in the child of God, has equally to await the period of its maturity. It is experiment which is here the test of truth; and the Scriptures court experiment. Let not any person, therefore, who becomes their disciple, be discouraged at the tardiness of his advancement;—for Christians are said to "grow in grace." But one ungenerous passion mitigated, an emotion of wrath, of envy, or of pride, restrained—an unkind temper softened, under the joint influence of God's word, and of God's Spirit, are symptoms that the work of the Lord is begun within, and the joyful earnest of better things than these. Let us then receive with equal thankfulness their kind reproofs as their gracious encouragement. It is through patience of God's holy word—through submission to its

discipline, however strict ;—through a cheerful reception of its doctrines, however mortifying ;—through a grateful acquiescence in its restraints, however severe, that we become prepared to receive “comfort” from it. We must bleed, in short, under this “sword of the spirit,” and suffer it to search and expose to us the wounds that sin has made upon us, before we can enjoy its consolations, or be made partakers of its promises. And then shall the most trying and arduous duties be no longer accounted grievous, nor impracticable. We shall “love” our “enemies, do good to them that hate, and pray for those that despitefully use us and persecute us.” That “peace which the world giveth not,” and “which the world taketh not away,” shall be our portion ; and thus dying unto sin, and self, and made “alive unto God,” we shall be enabled to “go on” our “way rejoicing,” ascribing the entire glory of all we are, and all we hope to be, to him who has given such ample means of becoming meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.



SERMON XIII.

Matt. vi. 16.

“WHEN YE FAST, BE NOT AS THE HYPOCRITES.”

AMONG the many duties practised by men in the name of religion, there is, perhaps, none concerning which a greater difference of opinion prevails than the subject of fasting. For, while some consider it as absolutely necessary to salvation, and think that they increase its merit by laying severe restraints even upon the just demands of nature;—and while some pursue the delusion still farther, and limit themselves to the use not only of certain portions, but even of certain kinds of food, and that too on certain days, and at certain seasons; others, on the contrary, reject all such bodily mortifications as absurd, and as deserving no place whatever in the religious system. Extremes of every kind are dangerous, and end as they begin, in error. The

one which places fasting so high, and that which discards it altogether, is equally in the wrong, because it is equally in the extreme, and because there is a middle way in which the proper use and improvement of fasting may be found. To point out to us this middle way, and direct our steps in it, seems to be our Saviour's chief object in the words of the text, "when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites."

The expression "*when ye fast*," neither commands nor forbids us so to do ; nor is our Saviour any more explicit on this head, in any other passage of the gospel. He neither enjoins us to keep particular fasts, nor does he make fasting of any kind a *necessary* act of religion. It was a piece of well-intended discipline in the Jewish Church, and as our Lord found it, so he left it, only reminding us to observe in this, as in every thing else, that sincerity and truth, without which nothing that we do *can* be acceptable to God—"when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites."

Yet this expression, "*when ye fast*," though it does not give any positive sanction to such a practice, must be allowed to imply a manifest acquiescence in it. Any more than this, was indeed unnecessary, because fasting, as a duty of religion, had been sufficiently established in the world from the earliest times, and our

Saviour himself, strictly observant as he was even of the forms of religion, had given it the countenance of his own example. We find that his most fervent prayers were often accompanied with fasting, and before his temptation in the wilderness, "he fasted forty days and forty nights." So that as far as his silent example goes, the advocates of fasting may, with some reason, claim the sanction of such high authority. But to fast merely because others have done so, and that too on occasions of a peculiar nature, and more particularly by persons of an extraordinary character;—or to fast without being able to give any satisfactory reason for such abstinence, is a blind submission to example, which is repugnant to common sense as well as to Christianity. For, this is not to "serve God in the spirit, and with the understanding," which is true religion—but to act as if we supposed that God is equally pleased with any outward performance, however unmeaning, which we may choose to do in his name. This has nothing in it acceptable to God, nor profitable to the soul. This is not godliness, but bodily exercise; and the Apostle expressly tells us, that "bodily exercise profiteth little, but that godliness is profitable to all things." This is to make religion, which is the business of a sound head,

and of a sound heart, to be nothing more than an unmeaning ceremony, a wearisome and an ungrateful task. It is, in short, to degrade ourselves from the rank of reasonable beings into the condition of the lower order of creatures, who ignorantly and stupidly follow "even as they are led."

Before we "fast" then, it is but doing justice to ourselves to inquire *why* and *when* we ought to do so.

The origin of fasting as a religious ordinance, may be traced to the nature of the thing itself. Now, fasting is one of those ways in which great sorrow is frequently expressed, when the mind is so overcome with grief that it feels a distaste to all enjoyment, and even causes us to loathe our daily bread. Such is often the effect of some great disaster, as the loss of friends, of property, of character, or of any other highly-valued temporal blessing. It is a sort of self-neglect, arising from distress and pain of heart, which finds no comfort in life, nor any desire to prolong it. Now, when the soul becomes the object of such sorrow, that is, when men are so deeply afflicted on account of sin, that they deny themselves in like manner, this is to fast under a sense of guilt, and out of a heartfelt anxiety to be delivered from it. By such neglect and

forgetfulness of self, men shew that the life of their souls is a greater care and concern to them than the life of their bodies; that the conviction of sin acts upon them with more severity than the want of nourishment, and that they cannot "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," whilst a spiritual disease thus undermines their peace. And thus fasting, (by a natural transition) becomes an exhibition of spiritual suffering; and thus did penitent sinners, from the earliest times, "humble their souls." David is a remarkable instance of it. The writings he has left behind him are full of the mournful complaints that attended this solemn expression of his grief, and afford a beautiful and an affecting example of the truly pious character which fasting assumes when it proceeds from sincere sorrow for sin, and is accompanied with a determination to forsake it, and a willingness declared by such abstinence, to suffer bodily privations as an indication of that sorrow, and as a means of preventing the commission, of the same in future.

But from this tendency to fasting, which grief of any kind on account of sin excites, arose the stated observance of it. For, as there is scarcely any thing good that is not followed by its counterfeit, or abused by the perversion of it, so sor-

row for sin having declared itself in fasting, it occurred to some, by a sort of argument more specious than rational, that were fasting introduced into the service of religion, it might put men in remembrance of their sins, by provoking self-examination, and thus move them to repentance. From the intimate connexion that subsists between the soul and the body, the mortification of the one seemed a likely means of subduing, or, at least, of restraining and of preventing the corrupt propensities of the other, since the body being the instrument of all our passions, whatever should diminish its natural strength might, it was presumed, greatly contribute to check the desire, and consequently to defeat or obviate the actual commission of sin. And thus fasting became a statedly religious ordinance, or rather, it was adopted as a help to religion, and as a preservative against vice. And, by degrees, as the abuse gathered strength, what might at first have been well-meant, and honestly practised, quickly degenerated into a superstitious and a mercenary service—acting in its best form, only mechanically through the body, the mind became its slave and not its convert. The feeling of its association with religion, as a corrective of the intemperate passions, was lost in the periodical formality of its use, and

the ungratefulness of its operation. There ceased to be any sympathy between the patient and the practice—and at length, spiritual ends being wholly given up, fasting was trusted in, and relied on as an act of meritorious obedience. But the abuse did not stop here—it was presumptuously recommended as a work of supererogation, or, as an extraneous and superabundant service, which, by its various degrees of self-mortification, should more or less expiate the various degrees and shades of moral transgression. And such is the spirit and the tendency of all the fasts that, through a long succession of ages even to this day, have been substituted for faith and obedience by the Clergy of the Church of Rome.

Having thus briefly traced the origin of fasting, with some of the gross perversions of it, in principle and in practice—we come next, to consider the suitable observance of it. We have seen *why*, and for *what* we ought to fast. We are now to examine *how*, that is, in what manner, and in what spirit we ought to do so. And on this our Lord has given us a short but comprehensive precept in the text, “when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites.”

What it is “to fast as hypocrites,” It explains in the remainder of the verse.—he is to assume the outward appearance of godly sor-

row, by an affected "sadness of countenance," and by "disfiguring the face," that we may "seem unto men to fast." Or, in other words, it is to seek in this, the praise of men, rather than the praise of God; to make the abstinence of the body minister, not to the humbling of the soul, but to the gratification of its pride, and thus to defeat the chief end of fasting, with the additional sin of disregarding the displeasure of an all-seeing God, who is the witness and the avenger of every imposition which we attempt to practise upon man. Sincerity then towards God being an essential quality of this, as well as of every act of religion, "when we fast," we should make no parade, no boast of it. As it is a matter that lies between God and our own souls, between God and our own souls should be kept, as much as possible, the knowledge of what we do. "God who is in secret, and who seeth in secret," knows the very thoughts of our hearts, so "open and naked are all things in his sight with whom we have to do." And, therefore, says our Lord, "when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face," observe then, as at other times, the accustomed cleanliness and decency of thy person, "that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in

secret, shall reward thee openly ;” not for the act of fasting, however rigorous it may be, but by blessing it in its consequences, as a religious discipline, as a salutary act of self-denial tending to produce submission and patience, holiness in the heart, and righteousness in the lives of all those who fast in secret, as unto the Lord, and not as unto men.

If fasting then be a matter of so private and personal a nature, it follows, that it should be altogether discretionary. By discretionary, I mean that it is scarcely possible to lay down rules, or to appoint seasons and periods of fasting suited to every particular case. As the constitutions of men differ, as the passions of some are naturally more violent and unruly than those of others;—as evil habits have taken deeper root;—and the soul is more depraved from longer connexion with a polluted body, so much the more severe should be every kind of religious discipline and restraint. That body which has been the most rebellious, should require the most chastisement. But the extent or degree of this chastisement can be estimated only by the degree of guilt—and of this degree no man can judge for another—it is to be computed for himself only by the impartial judgment of every man’s own conscience. Hence, it is evident, that to

fast must be, in a great measure, optional and voluntary, and with a proper end in view ; and that to fast at such periodical times as may be prescribed by the fancy or caprice of another, and as a matter of servile and reluctant duty, (as all such fasts generally are) must be totally absurd—because the times prescribed may not happen to accord with a consciousness of spiritual necessity in the persons required to observe them—and because the natural tendency of such an arbitrarily-imposed and ill-adapted service, must be to excite a hunger and a thirst after forbidden food, rather than “ a hunger and a thirst after righteousness.”

It is, in short, nothing more than a mere suspension of natural appetite, which cannot fail to induce a return to former evil habits, by sharpening the sensual affections, during the intervals of such unprofitable restraints.—

Wherefore, not to “ fast as the hypocrites,” must be to fast when occasion requires it, when we feel that the weakness of the spirit is in danger of being overcome by the intemperance of the flesh. One day of fasting with such an end in view, is self-correction in the true sense of the word. This is to act honestly by the soul for its improvement, and not as “ pleasing men,” nor pleasing self, “ but ” as pleasing “ God who trieth the heart.” Nor let it be

said, that if every man is allowed to be a judge in his own case, few will condemn themselves, and fewer still chastise themselves in this manner ; nor, that what is not appointed to be done at some particular time, will be done at no time ; for it is better that a thing should never be done, than that it should be done in such a way as to defeat the only valuable end of its institution, deluding the victims of such folly into a belief that they are serving God, and doing a good work, whilst the Lord regards not the multitude of such idle sacrifices, and whilst the evil of a work done as this work generally is, may be estimated by the increase it makes to self-righteousness, and by the proportion in which it detracts from that tenderness of conscience, and that lowliness in their own eyes, which are the characteristics of those who make a progress in righteousness and true holiness.

But a much better reply to this objection may be found in a more minute examination of that expression in which the objection itself originates. It has been laid down as a position consequent on the whole of the preceding argument, that fasting should be altogether discretionary ;—that is, it should be directed, in every individual, by a pious and enlightened judgment, which shall weigh well the circum-

stances of each particular case, and appropriate to it both the duration and the durance of such a discipline. But as the objection justly states, that no man is willing by nature, and of his own deliberate choice, to act with a discretion such as this; and as, in this avowal, it also admits that all men are sensual and selfish, "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," and as suffering, in every case, must be grievous, more particularly to the unfeeling and the impenitent;—it follows, that to act with a discretion suited to the ends of spiritual discipline in this, or in any other way, there must be a strong sense of sin, and a desire after holiness;—there must be a certain progress in self-knowledge, and in the knowledge of divine things, that a man may be duly qualified to judge himself, and candidly to follow up that judgment, or that he may be capable of thus prescribing for himself, and of using with any profit, his prescription. To all others—to the formal professor, fasting is nothing more than temporary bondage;—to the ignorant, it is a sort of sanction or an excuse to "go and sin" again;—to the self-righteous, it is an encouragement to hope against hope;—and to the sensualist, it is the type and anticipation of a future Purgatory! To these, and to all such as these, it is, at best, an antidote without the

apprehension of a disease, which instead of relieving the constitution by meeting and counteracting the approaches of evil, serves only to foment and to stimulate the latent seeds of it. Who then should fast? The awakened Christian. He who experiences a growth in grace, and is anxious to accelerate it, by wholesome correctives—he who still feels “sin warring in his members,” and threatening him with captivity to its ungodly dominion—he that reproves, and is willing to deny himself, and would make use of bodily mortification as auxiliary to a conquest over self. To such a person, and to such only, fasting is suitable, and cannot fail of becoming profitable. Enjoined by the decree of arbitrary and indiscriminating authority, it is the utmost folly;—and he who obeys such authority, and is actuated by no better motive, either blindly resigns his conscience and his reason to the guidance of another, which is degrading to the soul of man; or impiously disregards the injunction in the text, “when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites.”

You perceive then, that fasting is a religious discipline of no ordinary kind, and not to be engaged in lightly or irreverently:—that it is a spiritual exercise, peculiar to those who are already advanced in the kingdom of God;—

and that, like “ putting new wine into old bottles, or a piece of a new garment upon an old,” it is too rigorous an experiment for such as are weak in faith, and in the knowledge of themselves. Its strictness and austerity is more than they are able to bear, and for which they do not see any necessity. It should, however, be set before them under the seal of Christian experience, just as our Lord prescribed it as a matter, not more of necessity than of use to his disciples, at a certain period of their future progress in the Christian life,—“ the days will come when they shall fast in those days.” And in the same spirit does the Church of England introduce it to our notice—without appointing it as an indispensable duty, she permits it as a wise expedient. And whilst she attaches not the observance of it to certain days and seasons, which the very nature of the thing has left to the discretion of the pious and the penitent: she shapes the character of her services in such a manner as to make way for it, more particularly during the season of Lent, or spring-time, (which is the meaning of that word) and amidst the awful recollections which she would excite previous to the approaching commemoration of our Lord’s crucifixion. And that such a signal manifes-

tation of the love of God towards a sinful world might dwell with stronger impression on the mind, she has protracted this season of humiliation to forty days, with a happy reference to our Lord's abstinence during the same period, indirectly insinuating thereby our conformity by fasting, to this his most holy example. But not a word is said on the manner of this abstinence—what mortifications or self-denials are to be observed—what days or hours are sentenced to restraint—what meals are to be omitted or restricted—what food is proper or improper, and what kinds or quantities of it are holy and unholy. She merely reminds us of what is alone important,—the reason and the end of such a service, whilst the manner and the measure of its use and application are left entirely to the candid and judicious regulation of every truly Christian mind.

The result of all is this: Have we made such a progress "in holy conversation and godliness" as may qualify us to fast? Does communion with our own hearts discover that great impediments to such a progress arise, in our particular case, from the opposition of the body and its intemperate passions? And do we perceive how extenuation of the body ministers to the increase of spiritual strength?

Shall we not do wisely then in denying ourselves such things as tend to inflame the passions, and not only with regard to meat and drink, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes," in the way of mortification and of penalty, but also in the way of temperance, with regard to the "pride of life," and to various worldly enjoyments and pursuits, lawful, perhaps, and innocent in themselves, but indulged in exclusively, and with too much levity, or followed with too much anxiety? For, these as well as vice itself, and frequently with more lasting effect than vice, steal away the heart from God. Vice debilitates, or vice disgusts, and may cause the satiated prodigal to exclaim, "who will shew" me "any good;" but a constant round of worldly dissipation leaves the heart unoccupied by what is truly good, seeking as much its own will, and engaged as much with its own thoughts, as if it were wholly devoted to the service of sin. It is plain, therefore, that such avocations and pursuits as these, when detected and acknowledged, should be corrected by frequent abstinence from them. We should literally hold a solemn fast upon such things as these, and by often breaking in upon the habit, gradually repel its influence. Is the body disordered—do we not relieve it in the same way? Do we

not endeavour to remove whatever obstructs, whatever irritates, whatever renders it incapable of its natural functions? Let us deal with equal justice by its dear invisible companion. They require correctives and restoratives, each in its own way. The fevers, the agues, the numerous host of contagious and deadly distempers that afflict the one, find their parallel in the stubborn habits, the unruly lusts, the lukewarmness, the inconstancies, the inconsistencies, and the infidelities of the other. The disease and the nature of the disease, in both cases will suggest the character and the proper application of the remedy. In the case before us, experience from the most remote antiquity, and example in the most illustrious instances, warrant the experiment; and we require only an awakened conscience, a correct judgment, an honest heart, and a willing mind to try its efficacy. And here, in the last place, let it be carefully remembered how ungrateful a task this is to flesh and blood, and how little reason we have to expect that it will be performed faithfully in our own strength. We all desire to "speak" to ourselves, "smooth things," to "prophecy deceits." We are averse to admit that our case is bad; that the internal war which the flesh carries on against the spirit threatens to

prevail, or that the citadel, at least, is in any danger; and, therefore, when we fast, we should also pray. We should pray for the influence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to enter on so unpalatable a duty in sincerity, and "without hypocrisy." Thus shall these sacred exercises join in promoting the same common interest. To neglect either of them, when conscience recommends it, cannot be right; to practise them without meaning, must be wrong. But aiming, as the discipline now before us evidently should, at the subjugation of whatever is sensual and impure within us, and ranking, even in the estimation of our Lord himself, so high in the scale of spiritual exercises that he scruples not to associate it with prayer, in the performance of a supernatural work, "this kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting;" it detracts no more from its moral tendency that so many "fast as do the hypocrites," than it lessens the value of genuine prayer, that so many repeat a form of sound words with their lips, in which the heart has no concern. Both the one and the other may be eminently useful, if done in compliance with the precept of the text. They may both become, not only unprofitable, but injurious, if the end and the spirit there suggested are permitted to give way to the "forms of god-

liness without the power.” And, finally, with what prayer can we appear on such occasions, before the throne of grace, which embraces more completely and piously all that has been said than with that most beautiful collect of our Church—“ Oh ! Lord, who for our sakes, didst fast forty days and forty nights ; give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.”—Amen.

SERMON XIV.

Philip. iii. 17.

"BRETHREN, BE FOLLOWERS TOGETHER OF ME, AND MARK THEM WHICH WALK SO, AS YE HAVE US FOR AN ENSAMPLE."

It has been said, and with great propriety, that "example is living instruction;" and they, who are at all acquainted with the constitution of human nature, must be convinced, that embodied virtue or embodied vice cannot but be attended with the consequences of a wide spreading influence. Effects the most beneficial or the most pernicious, are inseparably connected with the character and conduct of every human being; and he who can so far disentangle himself from the relations and connexions of life, as to think little of the results attendant on his own character and station; must forget at once all pretensions to the man or the Christian. Such an one is dead to all moral responsibility, and can only be actuated by principles as destructive of the

welfare of the community, as they are certainly hostile to himself.

The Apostle Paul was deeply acquainted with the tendencies of human nature—he well knew the efficacy of example, and fearful of its evil effects on the Church at Corinth—he warns them that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” Of the Church at Philippi he had formed a very favourable opinion—he recognises in them the fruits of the Spirit—he saw that their conduct was in accordance with the principles of the Gospel, and accordingly he opens his Epistle with the expressions of his fervent and continued regard. But like a faithful pastor, ever alive to the interests of his flock, he warns them of approaching danger. The enemy had already begun to sow his tares, and he perceived even in this favoured Church, that there were men of perverse minds, given alike to worldly and sensual indulgence—and as their example might prove extremely injurious to the general interests of the Church, he not only deploras the grief which such misconduct produced in his own mind, but he calls upon the Philippians to follow the example which had been set before them, as well in the person of himself as of those who were walking in his footsteps.

“Brethren, be followers together of me,

and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ—whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things)—for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

■ In attempting an improvement of the passage I have selected for our meditation this day, we shall consider *the example proposed for our imitation*.—The Apostle Paul, in the sacred writings, stands before us in a *two-fold* capacity, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, and as the private Christian. It might be profitable, as well as interesting, to enlarge on his character as a minister of the Gospel—to behold him as the messenger of the glad tidings of salvation burning with an holy ardour, to consolidate and extend the Redeemer’s kingdom—and we cannot but confess, that it is with some degree of reluctance we forbear dwelling on so delightful a subject. As, however, in the passage under consideration, the Apostle is evidently speaking of himself in his private capacity, in that capacity we shall consider him as exhorting us, through the medium of the

Church at Philippi, to follow his illustrious example. The subject properly embraces the whole of the Apostle's character and conduct, but as the limits of a discourse will not admit of our even glancing at the varied circumstances of his life, and as he has in the chapter before us, spoken of himself and his general views, in very decided terms, we shall confine the subject to the noticing of those feelings and pursuits which are here depicted and proposed for our imitation. We have, then, in the chapter before us:

(1). *An utter rejection of any righteousness of his own, as a plea of justification in the sight of God.*—It is a lamentable fact, that although man be a transgressor of the Divine Law, and, on the authority of revelation, is declared to be by nature in a state of wrath—to possess an heart deceitful above all things, and a carnal mind, which is enmity against God—and thus situated, is exhorted to lay hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel; that notwithstanding the decisive statements of his misery on the one hand, and the affecting discoveries of mercy on the other, he is disposed in the matter of his acceptance with an offended Godhead, to cleave to a covenant of works. He ventures to appeal to a law which is denominated in terms not less awful than these, that it is “*the*

ministration of condemnation,” and confiding in performances, as defective in their execution, as they have been entirely wrong in their motives—he dares to challenge the Judge of all, on the merits of an admitted imperfect obedience. Such before his conversion was the Apostle Paul. He informs us in his Epistle to the Galatians, “*that he profited in the Jews religion above many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers*”—Gal. i. 14. And in the chapter from whence my text is taken, he affirms, “*that if any man thought he had whereof to trust in the flesh, he surely had more.*” His were no common or small pretensions—he had been circumcised the eighth day—he was lineally descended of the stock of Israel—of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, he was a Pharisee; concerning zeal, he even persecuted the Church, and as it respected his private life and conversation, he could appeal to all who had known him, that his character would bear the severest scrutiny. If ever there existed an human being, who might have had cause to pride himself upon his distinctions and attainments, it was certainly the Apostle Paul—he could trace back his genealogy to Israel and Abraham—he was descended of a tribe that

had never apostatized from the temple worship—he had to boast that both his parents were Hebrews—that he himself had been peculiarly strict, both in the Mosaic ceremonies and the traditions of the elders—his persecution of the Church had but too plainly proved his zeal for the Jewish religion—and, in fine, he could allege, that his whole external conduct was so conformable to the letter of the law, that in respect of that kind of righteousness, it was utterly impossible to lay any thing to his charge—and yet with a character which, doubtless, had excited the admiration and respect of the Jewish Sanhedrim—and was accompanied with feelings of no small complacency towards himself—he tells us in a few short words in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans—“that the commandment which was ordained to life, he found to be unto death.” Hence, there was a complete revolution in his mind—he had been alive without the law once, but when the commandment came in all its righteous authority and extent, sin revived and he died—and guilty and helpless and polluted, he renounces all claims to any righteousness of his own—and tells the Philippians, that what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ. “Yea,” says he, “doubtless, and I

count all things,—as well my former pretensions as my present attainments,—but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Here then we would pause, and make the inquiry—are we thus minded with the Apostle Paul? There is an account to be tendered in at the bar of Heaven—and if we are at all alive to the awful solemnities of a future judgment, we shall be anxious to ascertain from the assured declarations of Scripture, upon what ground we may stand justified before an holy and a jealous God? If the Scriptures have a meaning, it is absolutely certain, “that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”—and the man who will venture his eternal interests upon the plea of a comparatively harmless and innocent life, is alike unacquainted with the nature of sin, the purity of the law, and the holiness of God. “If,” says the admirable and judicious Hooker, “God should make us an offer thus large—search all the generations of men since the fall of our

father Adam, find one man that hath done one action, which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action, neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both.—Do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels, could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do any thing meritorious, or worthy to be rewarded?"

My brethren, the subject upon which we are speaking, is one of infinite moment—God hath made his beloved Son "to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"—and if you trust to your own righteousness, and do not unreservedly confide in the proclaimed mercy of him "who is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus"—it is our duty to warn you, that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." You will have to meet the righteous Governor of the world, not with the consolatory plea, that "if any man sin there is an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and that "he is the propitiation for our sins"—but with the bold determination of appealing to a law that has been broken in word, thought, and deed—a law that worketh

wrath—a law which states, that “as many as are under its works, are under a curse.”—Look diligently, lest any of you fail of the grace of God.—It is written, and who shall reverse the record—“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace.” Gal. v. 4.

But this will lead us to notice another feature in the Apostle’s character:—

(2). *A cordial acceptance of the Redeemer.*—It must be obvious to the slightest reflection, that this subject is intimately and necessarily connected with the former. “The whole need not a physician, it is only they that are sick.” Prior to his conversion, the Apostle informs us, that he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth—and when he subsequently reflected upon his character and conduct, in his daring opposition to the cause of the Redeemer, he can scarcely find language strong enough to express on the one hand, his deep abhorrence of himself, and on the other, his admiring views of the Divine mercy. He glories in the declaration, that “it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”—and instances himself, for the encouragement of all that should hereafter believe, as the most illus-

trious monument of the Saviour's compassion and forbearance—and those of you who are at all conversant with the Apostle's writings, cannot fail to have observed the fervency and frequency of his discussions on the love, power, grace and majesty of the Redeemer.

But I am aware that to this statement it may be objected—that the Apostle is rejecting his own righteousness as well as expressing his cordial acceptance of the righteousness of Christ—on his immediate conversion to the Christian religion. If this argument has any weight, it must be confirmed by his subsequent statements. To his subsequent statements, therefore, we are particularly anxious to direct your attention, and without multiplying quotations in illustration of my argument—we would claim a candid examination of the Apostle's views, in the eighth verse of the chapter from whence the text is taken. In the preceding verse he has stated what were his first views on the subject—but in the eighth verse we have his deliberate and confirmed conviction—"yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Here, if language have a meaning, and that meaning can be at all defined—the Apostle not only had

judged at his first conversion, that his legal righteousness and his worldly prospects were loss to him compared to Christ—but after many years spent in successfully preaching the gospel of the grace of God—with an authority which none could question—with gifts the most extraordinary—with labours the most prodigious—with sufferings multiplied almost beyond measure, and with an holiness of character so bright and so exemplary, that he could call upon his converts to be followers of him, as he followed Christ—yet, have we heard his determined resolution, nay, his joyful exultation, of deeming all his attainments to be *loss* in comparison of the most excellent knowledge of his Redeemer. His natural vigour of mind—his decided superiority of talent—his great and extensive learning—his connexions—his interests—his prospects and his friends—all which had seemed to promise him the most flattering prosperity—had been instantly and for ever abandoned;—and in this record of the power of divine grace, we cannot but recognize that same grand and characteristic feature in the Apostle's views, which he has so emphatically stated in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the

world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Nor let it for a moment be imagined, that these views are peculiar to the Apostle Paul; they have purified and supported the Church in every age, and when the mediatorial kingdom of the Redeemer shall end, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads—the Hierarchy of Heaven—cherubim and seraphim—angels and arch-angels—the spirits of the just made perfect—thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, will swell the universal chorus—"Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Here you will permit me to inquire, have we any of this holy fervor which animated the Apostle of the Gentiles? Have we by a living faith accepted Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King? There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved—are we resting with an undivided reliance on this foundation? He alone can be acknowledged a true Christian, who has thus accepted the offered mercies of redemption. He alone can be recognized as a true Christian, who can say with St. Paul,

if not in the same degree, yet with more sincerity—"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live—not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Let it never be supposed that this is a speculative subject—it is eminently practical, and the person who is so far infatuated as to imagine that the mere profession, and the external observances of Christianity, may be substituted for the genuine faith in the Redeemer which consists by love, is indeed disastrously exposed to the inspired Apostle, who thus writes to the Church at Corinth,—"the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if we died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should hereafter live unto him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Cor. v. 14.

But this will lead us to notice another distinguishing feature in the private character of the Apostle, proposed for our imitation.

(3). *His unremitting pursuit after that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*—The doctrines of the gospel are doctrines according to godliness. They are as much calculated to produce personal holiness in ourselves, as they manifestly vindicate the right-

eous authority of the moral Governor of the world. If on the one hand, they exhibit the abounding mercy of God, reconciling the world unto himself by the vicarious sacrifice of his Son—they do not less forcibly depict on the other hand, the genuine consequences of a cordial reception of the gospel. That same spirit which sanctified the Son that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and make us a peculiar people zealous of good works—is stated in the Scriptures to be the great agent in effecting a moral renovation, in enlightening the mind, subduing the passions, and purifying the heart—"Know ye not," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. iii. 16) "that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you"—"if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." And the same Apostle writing to Titus, lays it down as a general and incontrovertible position, "that the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Let us, however, advert to the illustrious pattern before us. If it be the design of the gospel to engage us to aspire at perfection, to renew us after the image of him that created us, to make us even in this life approach the nature

of glorified Saints, and, to say, all in one word, if we are called "to be perfect as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect"—if this be the definition of living Christianity, then was it fully justified in the Apostle of the Gentiles. You have heard his utter renunciation of any righteousness of his own—his fixed determination of cleaving to the cross of Christ;—now let us attend to his holy purpose of pursuing with unwearied diligence and unabating ardour, his heavenly career. "Brethren, (we are quoting the 13th and 14th verses) I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Let this be contrasted with what he has stated in the 20th verse, of "his having his conversation in heaven"—and you cannot fail to observe, if I may use the expression of an eminent writer, that "his master, his model, his original, his all, was Jesus Christ;—and he copied every stroke of his original, be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."* St. Paul, so to speak, was an hero in Christianity—the same principle that engaged him

* Saurin.

to embrace the gospel, diffused itself through all his life and conversation. In him was exemplified the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love—he had learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content—he knew both how to be abased and he knew how to abound,—every where, and in all things, his actions verified the sincerity of his profession—yet, this meek, this humble, this holy, this ardent Christian, who triumphs in the consideration that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him—informs us in the chapter before us, that disregarding all his past attainments, and despising all his former services, he was still aiming, by further labours, by increasing diligence, and by higher advancements in holiness, to finish his course, and obtain the prize,—and as the racer in the Isthmian games, seemed to forget the ground over which he had run, and the competitors whom he had left behind, and put forth all the vigour and agility of his limbs to outstrip such as were before him—so the Apostle by still greater exertions, pants as it were to press forward with unremitting speed, to the victor's crown suspended before him. One thing engaged his undivided attention, he forgot the things which were behind, he pressed forward to those things which were before—and using

the same metaphor on a similar occasion, he tells us, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

Such were the views, and such was the character of the Apostle Paul—and such, though in a very inferior degree, is the judgment and the experience of every sincere Christian. No measures of personal holiness—no habits of self-denial—no triumphs over indwelling sin, constitute any claim to personal desert. He counts all but loss, that he may win Christ—and while he thus approves, and cordially accepts the divine method of justification, he pours contempt upon all his attainments, and becomes continually humbled for his manifold defects and defilements. In his Christian course he endeavours "to walk by the same rule and mind the same things." A perpetual progress in the divine life, is the object of his ambition—and unsubdued by the allurements as well as by the frowns of the world, he is seeking to be prepared for the second coming of his Lord, that "he may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." There will be great and distinctive disparities among

real Christians—arising from their varied dispositions and different situations in life—but we assert with the utmost confidence, that all who are, in any measure, like-minded with the Apostle Paul, have somewhat of his purposes, desires, and expectations. They who are the most perfected and matured in the divine life, will, like the Apostle, be clothed with humility—and they who have but lately set out, will strive to emulate such honourable examples. They will seek to grow in grace—to abound in the fruits of the Spirit: and “giving all diligence, will add to their faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”

We have had a brief, but faithful statement of the character of the real Christian—and I would charge it upon myself, as well as upon your consciences, have we any of the distinctive marks, the undoubted lineaments of the children of God? Is there in us the death unto sin? Is there in us the life of righteousness? In our baptismal covenant we were solemnly pledged “to renounce the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same”—in the solemn

office of confirmation—we ratified and confirmed in our own persons, in the presence of God and before his Church, the promise and vow that had been made at our baptism—and if we have approached the table of the Lord, we have, over the memorials of the dying love of the Redeemer, offered and presented ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be “a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God.”

May conscience, aided by the Spirit’s power, do its office—if there be any before me, who, attached to the letter of Christianity, are uninfluenced by its spirit—any who, by indulging in forbidden lusts, deny the very name of Christian—any who are so engaged in earthly pursuits as to neglect the high destinies of a future existence—let me remind them with Christian earnestness and love, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, and whatever they may think, through the deceitfulness of sin, the pleasures of the world and wiles of the Devil—God is not, and cannot be mocked. He has sent his Son to bless us in turning away every one of our iniquities—but should these his gracious purposes fail, there is nothing before us, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. A new and living way has been consecrated for us—but if

we wilfully despise this revealed mercy, we shall have to meet our God as "a consuming fire."

It was our intention to have enforced the imitation of the Apostle's example: and we had purposed doing this, by adverting first to the nature of the Christian calling—and secondly, by pointing out the superiority of its enjoyments. But we have already trespassed upon your time, and it must suffice us to observe that, perhaps, the most powerful motive to Christian diligence in following the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, will be found in his animating views at the approach of death. Encouraging his beloved Timothy to do the work of an Evangelist, and to make full proof of his ministry, he speaks with as much composure of the hour of death as we ordinarily speak of retiring to rest—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

Surely there can be amongst us but one expression, "let me die the death of the righteous,

and let my last end be like his." To experience consolation in the midst of sorrow—to enjoy light when all is darkness around us—to have an assured confidence in the hour of death, and at the approach of judgment—these are the triumphs of the Christian martyr. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down upon my throne, even as I overcame and am sat down on my Father's throne."

SERMON XV.

John xx. 30, 31.

“AND MANY OTHER SIGNS TRULY DID JESUS IN PRESENCE OF HIS DISCIPLES, WHICH ARE NOT WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK: BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN, THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD; AND THAT BELIEVING YE MIGHT HAVE LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME.”

THE signs here spoken of, are shewn by the context to be those which our Lord performed after he was risen from the dead; and we have the assurance of the Evangelist, that although he did not specify them all, yet those he has recorded furnish ample evidence of his being the Son of God. We shall proceed to inquire

First, into the proofs of his Resurrection, “many signs truly did Jesus in presence of his disciples.”

Secondly, into the evidence of Jesus being the Son of God, which his Resurrection furnishes, “written, that ye might believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God.”

And advert thirdly, to the result of believing

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begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him," and the life through his name of which the text speaks, consists in a state altogether the opposite of that which belongs to the state of fallen man. Life is the turning of the heart to God—the fixing the affections so firmly on him as to render the Psalmist's words a just expression of the predominant feelings of the soul, "whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee." The conduct is and must be influenced by this new disposition of the heart and affections—for what makes an ungodly man act as he does? Is it not because he loves sin, loves the world, and dislikes every thing that is not connected with the habitual bent of his inclinations?—Let another and contrary feeling, love to God, predominate in his mind, and all his affections will flow in a different channel—this change is to pass from death unto life—this is to be born of the Spirit, and this is to be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Now, as spiritual death leads to eternal death, so this possession of life spiritual, leads to life eternal, which is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is imparted freely as a means of accomplishing that gracious design of bringing many sons to glory, which

is laid before us in the Holy Scriptures, “for God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Life spiritual and life eternal, are said to be through the name of Jesus; “these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” In the persons here addressed the results of believing that which the resurrection proves, were accomplished; and thence we see that to believe on the name of the Son of God, was to receive Jesus as such, to consider his death as the predicted atonement which Messiah was to offer, to regard it as the efficient sacrifice to which the types pointed, and to trust to it alone for the removal of sin. He that believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. His heart is turned to love God, because his belief of the truth has taught him that God first loved him—his affections are placed on him, “because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him,” and loving God, he keeps his commandments. There is now no predominance of sinful affections in his mind—being risen with Christ, he seeks those things which are above, where

Christ sitteth on the right hand of God ; he sets his affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for he is dead, and his life hid with Christ in God ; and knowing that when Christ who is his life shall appear, he shall also appear with him in glory, he mortifies his members which are upon the earth, and renounces those things for whose sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.— Every one must allow that such a change is neither small nor unimportant, nor easily overlooked ; it is the result of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and is produced and carried on by the influence of God's Holy Spirit, which having been given when Jesus was glorified, connects the whole of this blessing with his resurrection.

The character and conduct of a real Christian is described as the effects of life, of a new and holy principle implanted in his soul, whereby his affections are directed, and his conversation influenced : let us always bear this in mind, when we would ponder the paths of our feet, and question ourselves whether we are treading a broad and frequented way, or a narrow and comparatively a solitary path. Living to God is the real test of conversion—acting under the influence of things which are unseen, and endeavouring to ap-

prove himself the servant of Him who is invisible, the believer gives undisputed evidence that he knows Jesus, and the power of his Resurrection; and in addressing real Christians on the proofs of the resurrection, we feel that we are exhibiting the most powerful motives which can influence them "with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord"—the most consoling topics which can give peace to the conscience, and the most effectual remedy against the fear of death. "Come see the place where the Lord lay"—what proof does that empty tomb afford of the love of our master and only Saviour? Consider what he endured in his passage to that tomb—and attend to the admonition with which it addresses you, "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore, glorify God with your bodies and your spirits which are his." Yea, brethren, while your hearts are moved by the contemplation of such love—let me ask, "shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" how shall we "who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Here also does the empty tomb furnish consolation to the penitent,—“be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all who believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be

justified by the law of Moses:”—and what power can the fear of death exercise over him who stands at this place where death was swallowed up in victory, and hears it proclaimed by the voice of triumph, “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept, for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” “O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Be ye, therefore, my beloved brethren, steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

There are, however, many persons whose judgment is convinced of the truth of the Resurrection, but in whose minds it produces no practical results, because they are not sensible of any connexion it has or can have with their spiritual state. To such, however, we have to present the resurrection in a point of view touching them so closely, as to insure at least a momentary attention to its consequences. “The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness,

by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." If we could induce the thoughtless and the worldly-minded to join us in the contemplation of this subject, we might expostulate with them on the lamentable folly of their present conduct. Here, we can say, is the place where the Lord lay,—as surely as he was laid here, so surely must your body one day be deposited in the grave—and as surely as he rose, so surely will he come again to be your judge; in that day he will enter into judgment with you, and when this great day of his wrath arrives who shall be able to stand.

Thus sanctioned by the certainty of the Resurrection, we preach repentance to the ignorant and the sinful—exhort them to seek the Lord—proclaim the necessity of a change of mind, and exhibit that truth, which man must believe, or else be lost for ever. Consider then this, the real situation in which you are placed—if thou art wise thou shalt be wise for thyself, and if thou scornest thou alone shalt bear it.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you

perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.—Amen.

SERMON XVI.

Psalm cx. 1.

THE LORD SAID UNTO MY LORD, "SIT THOU ON MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES THY FOOTSTOOL."

"ALL Scripture," we are told by St. Paul, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This splendid eulogium, on the Sacred Volume, which points out so clearly God to be its Author, instruction to be its means, and salvation from sin and from misery to be its end; this splendid eulogium though applicable to every part and portion of the word of revelation, is more peculiarly true of the book of Psalms.—Whether we regard that portion of the Sacred Scriptures as to its variety of subject, or its intenseness of devotion—whether we consider its heart-searching

delineations of man, or its elevated descriptions of God—whether we mourn with the afflicted Psalmist over his sins, or listen to the cheering strains which mark the rejoicing of the son of Jesse, reconciled to his God and Lord—we may well say with a late most learned commentator, “I know nothing like the book of Psalms, it contains all the lengths, breadths, depths and heights of the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations.” The Psalmist seems to have been permitted to experience every vicissitude of human life, that every believer might find instruction in his recorded sentiments; and while the response of conscience, and the sigh of contrition, prove that in all ages human nature has been the same weak victim to vice and to temptation, the awakened faith of the Jewish Monarch, and the promises which elevate his hopes, have been the source of spiritual consolation and rejoicing in every age to every member of the Redeemer’s kingdom. Writing under the influence of intense personal feeling, the Psalmist’s joys and sorrows, backslidings and repentance, consolation and triumph, find a counterpart in every believer’s bosom, and form the incentive and the material for personal devotion; while through his Divine antitype he becomes the representative of the Church,

and his sacred strains have been consecrated to the public service of that Church, since first inspired by the Being who is their mighty subject. Nor is it only as a code of instruction, a manual of devotion, or a record of experience, that the Psalms of David are valuable—they contain too a development of God's eternal wisdom—a display of his redeeming mercy—a manifestation of the incarnate Saviour:—"the man of God" could not "be perfect," if this, the brightest disclosure of God's goodness were not set before him, and we know that the "Son of Jesse, the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, hath said, the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."—Hence, the mysteries of redemption form a large proportion of this book—sometimes typical and figurative, concealing under the name and offices of David, the nature and character of him, who was both "the root and the offspring of David," and under the literal Israel, the sufferings and elevation of the spiritual—sometimes throwing aside the mystic veil which shrouds the councils of the Godhead, and admitting the awe-struck inquirer to a nearer view of the stupendous plan for man's redemption; and sometimes involving the same inscrutable designs in mysterious

union with rite and ceremony, and type and figure, with allusion to passing occurrences, and appeals to national feeling, so that it becomes difficult to trace the footsteps of prophecy through the strain of inspiration, or to mark the limit between what is merely literal and what is strictly prophetic. In the first species of composition, the mode of interpretation which the Apostle to the Galatians applies to History, may fairly be extended to the sacred poet, nor "is there" says Bishop Horsey, "a single page in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he read to find him." "David's complaints, are those of the Messiah—David's afflictions, are Messiah's sufferings—David's penitential supplications, are the supplications of Messiah in agony—David's songs of triumph and thanksgiving, are Messiah's songs for victory over sin, and death, and hell"—and under the public history of Israel, its reverses, its sufferings, its final elevation, the fortunes, the persecution, the glories of the Church of God, are not obscurely intimated. In the latter species, when the Prophet rises with his mighty theme, he throws off the encumbrance of type and figure, and in that drama, which in its period includes all time, and in its place the illimitable universe, he introduces with mighty daring as the specta-

tors and the actors, the eternal Godhead, the incarnate Son, the Church militant on Earth, the Church triumphant in Heaven, and Angels, the ministers of his will, who wait to do his bidding. Of this sacred and unambiguous style, the second, the forty-fifth, parts of the twenty-fourth and sixty-eighth Psalms, and the Psalm before us, are splendid specimens; unequalled, perhaps, but by the strains of the evangelical Isaiah, or the sublimer visions of the Apocalyptic prophecy. Among the more involved examples of direct prediction, other parts of the twenty-fourth and sixty-eighth Psalms may be enumerated, which in addition to the difficulties inherent in the nature of prophecy, present others, from the guise in which the Holy Spirit has been pleased to clothe its visions; seizing on the occurrences of a great religious solemnity, and rendering it not easy to mark the boundary between the scene present to the Prophet's eye, and that which was but impressed upon his enraptured fancy. It may, indeed, be said in general, that the prophetic is in its nature more obscure than the historical Psalm, as resulting from immediate inspiration, which presents to the eye of the Prophet, shifting and varying visions, whose change is not always perceptible, or succession always to be traced; but it may be re-

marked that this difficulty is diminished, and the unity of these sacred songs, their connexion and coherence then best observed and made apparent, when the reader or the commentator seeks in them for the development of the Divine attributes in the dealings of God with his people, and sees in the intellectual and moral creation, Jesus Christ "who filleth all in all."

The Psalm to which I would now call your attention, has long been the source of joy and edifying to the Christian world.—Consecrated by the Church to the solemn service of the Nativity, by it have the pious for ages solemnized their devotions, and addressed as their God the Lord of David—none of the sacred collection seems to have been so frequently quoted by the inspired writers of the New Testament; by its well-known application to the Messiah, were the Pharisees confounded by our Lord; by it were the fears awakened and the faith confirmed, of the multitude to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and from it did the Apostle to the Hebrews draw his decisive proof, that the Messiah was far exalted above the Angelic host, for "to which of the Angels said he at any time, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" That the

Psalm then alludes to the Messiah, we professing Christians can have no doubt, or that the Author of it is the son of Jesse—and although the modern Jews, seeing the advantage gained to the Christian cause by this application of prophecy, have endeavoured to pervert its meaning, we have the Ancient Jewish Church symbolizing on our side, and the ancient commentators, with but few exceptions, unanimous in declaring the “Adon” of David to be the Messiah. That such was the prevailing opinion at the time of our Lord, is manifest from the reception which his question met with—had a different application prevailed or even been suggested, how eagerly would the Pharisees have availed themselves of its shelter to evade the force of our Lord’s reasoning; or could they have used the refuge of modern commentators, that of making David its primary object, they might have denied its secondary meaning. Many modern Jews, indeed, compelled by the language of the Prophet, confess its meaning to be fulfilled in the Messiah, though they deny the Messiahship to Jesus of Nazareth; but others make Eleazar the Steward of Abraham, author of the Psalm, and suppose it addressed to that Patriarch—while some suppose David, others Solomon, Hezekiah, or Zerubbabel to be its object. The

wildness of these conjectures effectually disprove them—to which of these personages did the regal, prophetic, and sacerdotal characters so peculiarly belong? Which of them in conjunction with unbounded rule could be denominated a priest for ever? Which, as St. Peter argues, could without blasphemy, be said to sit down at the right hand of God? We have in the Psalm, the accession of some great potentate to his throne—we have unlimited rule promised, an everlasting priesthood conferred, and the utter destruction of his enemies denounced; the number of his people compared to the dew drops, which from the womb of the morning spangled and brightened the early grass,—the downfall of his enemies declared, and blessings and elevation promised to his followers; and round all this, by the magnificence of the subject, the severe sublimity of the expressions, and the awful grandeur of the dialogue, there is a superhuman *halo* thrown, which would make it profanation to apply it to a lower than the Messiah. Who but he was David's Lord, and in such strict communion with Jehovah, as is described by "sitting at his right hand?" who but he, a conqueror reigning at Jerusalem, King to all eternity, having an everlasting priesthood, Judge of all

nations, triumphing over all opposition, and ruling with his people “made willing” in “the beauties of holiness?”—The commentator who would apply those elevated declarations to any other than to Christ the expected Messiah, must either degrade the sublime expressions of the Prophet, or must discover in the rolls of history, sacred or profane, some other personage to whom the three-fold character belongs, who not only “sits and bears rule” for ever “on his throne,” but is also “a priest upon that throne,” and between whom and the most high God, is the eternal “counsel of peace.”

There is, indeed, another view of the subject taken by a late valuable commentator, to whose work on the Psalms has been, perhaps hyperbolically, applied, the expression used by David of the sword of Goliath, “there is none like it.” The learned Venema, to whom I have alluded, while he treats with contempt the absurd conjectures of the modern Jews, and applies to the Messiah in their full and exclusive meaning the first four verses of the Psalm, thinks that from that passage the discourse is addressed to David, and that protection is promised to him from his numerous enemies, and permanence to his infant kingdom. He would thus divide the

Psalm into two distinct partitions, making Messiah and his inauguration the subject of the former, and David and his concerns the theme of the latter. To this view of the subject, although supported by such authority, I can by no means assent—the consistency of the poem would seem to require that the Being at whose right hand the “Adon” is placed, should be the same throughout the address, while the emphatic manner in which the pre-eminence is stated in the first verse, would seem to preclude its application in the fifth, in a sense so much inferior.—Venema is compelled by his hypothesis to change the received translation of that verse into the following: “the Lord is at thy right hand; *he* will strike through Kings in the day of his wrath,” thus dividing the sentence, and introducing two words for which he has no authority in the original. His reasoning on the subject is far from being conclusive—he objects that the Lord who sits at Jehovah’s right hand, could scarcely while in that exalted situation perform the awful deeds which are subsequently ascribed to him, and he considers the destruction threatened in the concluding verses, to suit rather with the temporal character of the Old Testament dispensation, than with the mild and gracious features of the Gospel—rather to apply to the

wars of David, than to the rule of Christ. To the first observation it may be replied, that as the exaltation of the Saviour is said to be "until his enemies are made his footstool," that is in Scripture phrase, for ever; the difficulty, if any exist, is equal on his view of the subject, to that which attends the exclusive application to Messiah;—what is done by his pervading influence is done by his agency, and is expressly and justly ascribed to his power. But Venema, and the remark will apply to his second objection—Venema seems to have forgotten that the conquests of the Messiah are of a two-fold character—that if he conquers to convert by the power of his grace all who yield to his influence, he also conquers to destroy the obstinately rebellious; if in the 45th Psalm, "he girds his sword upon his thigh, and rides prosperously" inculcating "truth, and meekness, and righteousness," the same great being in the 68th, is described as "wounding the head of his enemies, and dipping his foot in their blood"—if he came "meek and lowly, by his knowledge justifying many," he is also "the traveller in the greatness of his might, with dyed garments from Bozrah, treading the wine press alone, trampling the people in his anger, for the day of vengeance was in his heart"—if he be described by one Prophet as

“judging his people with righteousness and his poor with judgment,” he is represented by another as “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood,” as having a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth, “that with it he should smite the nations;” as “treading the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”—Instead then of assenting to Venema’s arguments, I would think the Psalmist’s picture of the conquering Messiah imperfect, indeed, if it included but one feature of that character; if it exhibited “the rod” of Messiah’s strength “ruling from Sion,” and “the people made willing in the day of his power,” but omitted the awful judgments which await the impenitent, when the Heathen who “rage, and the people who imagine vain things; when the kings of the earth who set themselves, and the rulers who take counsel together, shall all be broken with a rod of iron, shall be dashed in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Whether those awful images are descriptive of the day of judgment, or as prophecy would seem rather to intimate, of a previous manifestation of the power and justice of the Messiah, it would be presumptuous here to determine; but assuredly the day will come, when mercy will be no longer vouchsafed only to be abused, and when even he, the Prince of Peace will say, “but those mine

enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

We have seen the application of this Psalm to Messiah, or rather its inapplicability to any other personage. We have seen that neither Abraham, nor David, nor Hezekiah, in whole or in part, can be concerned in its interpretation; but confessedly much difficulty remains behind. The Psalm itself seems to be a fragment wrested violently from some larger composition; we are left without introduction, and termination—we know not the time when, nor the occasion on which it was composed, and the disjointed nature of its periods, and the unnoticed transition of speakers involve its meaning in much obscurity. Having avowed my conviction that it is to be applied to Messiah, and to Messiah only, I shall on the present occasion but present you with the general view which I have been induced to take of the meaning of this interesting portion of Scripture, reserving its particular confirmation and establishment to a future opportunity.

In the fifth chapter of the second Book of Samuel, we are told, that "David took the strong hold of Zion," and "dwelt in the fort, and called it the City of David, and went on,

and grew great, and the Lord God of Hosts was with him." In the next chapter we are informed, both of his interrupted attempt to bring up the ark of the Lord, and of his final success—"So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of a trumpet." For such a solemnity, the enthroning of the ark of the covenant, the visible representation of Jehovah, in the place in which he loved to fix his name, two of the most splendid, though confessedly the most mysterious Psalms, are supposed to have been composed—and the sixty-eighth which was sung during the progress of the bearers of the ark, and the twenty-fourth which hallowed its reception on the sacred hill on which God desired to dwell, while they bear testimony to the high and awful strains of David, prove likewise how deeply impressed he was with the presence of the Most High. Both of these Psalms are recognised by our Church as prophetic of the Messiah's kingdom, of the glories of his ascension, and the influence of his reign; and under the inspiration of such a moment and for a similar purpose, do I conceive the Psalm before us to have been composed. David had felt the protecting hand of God, and the inbreathing influence

of the Spirit; he had seen himself raised from the sheep-cot to be king over Israel, and like Abraham he must have known himself the progenitor of the promised Messiah; he had been permitted to conduct the ark of God, from its exile to the tabernacle, and it had been given to him to see, that in that passage, an ascension great beyond mortal imagination was shadowed out—he had been taught that one descended from himself “according to the flesh,” one partaking of flesh and blood, the true Schechinah had dared to approach those everlasting doors, into which no son of Adam could demand an entrance—that attended by myriads of astonished and rejoicing spirits he called with the power of the Godhead, and the claims of a conqueror to the gates to “lift up their heads,” to “the everlasting doors to be lifted up, that the King of Glory should enter, the Lord strong and mighty in battle,” and he had been privileged to behold that He “the King of Hosts,” the all-conquering Messiah had entered in, that having “led captivity captive, and ascended on high, he was to receive gifts for man, yea, even for the rebellious.” Can we suppose that his inspiration ceased here? That the visions of glory terminated with the unclosing of the heavenly portals, that the Prophet was not admitted to see the entrance of

the Lord of Hosts into his mediatorial kingdom? Can we think that he, whose strains bear such awful testimony to his conviction of human guilt and of divine justice, he who had witnessed in prophetic vision the ascension of that Being, who was in after ages to breathe forth his prayers and supplications in the inspired words of David—can we think that he was not permitted to see that great event accomplished, whose rise and progress he had witnessed, and accomplished it was not until the priesthood of the Messiah was recognised, until the blood of the voluntary victim was presented in the Holy of Holies, and Jesus Christ, the mysterious union of God and man, was received as the mediatorial King, and hailed as “the Priest for ever?” This want, this interruption in these two splendid Psalms, is supplied by the one under our consideration;—the sixty-eighth hails the ascent of the Messiah, prefigured by the translation of the ark, and gives a rapid and obscure view of the glories and the blessings consequent upon that event; the twenty-fourth exhibits to us, the Messiah ascending to his redemption throne, upborn by the wings of Angels and Arch-angels, and hosanned by the whole intelligent creation; it marks in the most glowing colours the triumphant entry of Messiah into the

heavenly regions, and the tone of authority and power with which he commands that entrance—it sends him attended by the Angelic Host to his Father's Throne, there to claim that pre-eminence which was his by inheritance, and his by conquest—and here the Psalm before us, “takes up the wondrous tale”—it exhibits to us the awful solemnities of his reception—it represents the Father bestowing on his well-beloved Son the Kingdom which he had earned, exalting him to that throne, and putting all things under his feet—receiving him in his office of Prophet, and promising universality and permanence to “the rod of his strength”—receiving him in the office of Priesthood, his own peculiar Priesthood, and confirming its efficacy and duration by an oath—thus perfecting the redemption scheme, and completing the conquest “over sin and death, and him who had the power of death.” Man united with God was raised to the throne of Being—Man united with God perfected the sacrifice which was demanded, and the Angelic Host is represented by the Psalmist as taking up the strain, and hymning the future triumphs of the King of Glory, triumphs over his foes, whom he will visit in the day of his wrath, and triumphs with his willing people, whom he will assist

with his spirit, refine by his grace, and exalt into his glory. Such do I conceive to be the occasion, the object, and the tendency of this sacred song—to me it appears to be eminently an *epinicion*, or song of victory—it celebrates the triumph of the conqueror, it presents him with the rewards of victory, and it predicts future conquests as crowning his glory ; while elsewhere we see the Captain of our salvation militant—here we see him triumphant,—while elsewhere we see his offices inchoate—here they are perfected by the approval of the Godhead, and the promise of eternity—here we have instruction consolidating empire, and the atonement completed by the everlasting Priesthood.

The view which I have presented to you, I shall endeavour to confirm and extend by an examination of this Psalm on the succeeding Sabbath, if spared by Providence. Permit me now to remind you, my beloved, how awful is our state if these Scriptures be true—but two classes are alluded to in our Psalm, those who present themselves as a free will offering to God, and are “made willing in the day of his power,” and those who will become the victims of his justice, who will be “stricken through in the day of his wrath.”

May our God give us grace to chuse that which is good ; may he enable us to bow before the rod of his power, and to own his influence here, so may we have communion with him hereafter, where he sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on High.



SERMON XVII.

Psalm cx. 1.

THE LORD SAID UNTO MY LORD, "SIT THOU ON MY RIGHT
HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES THY FOOTSTOOL."

WHEN last I was permitted by Providence to address you from this place, I endeavoured to set before you a general view of the occasion, design, and object of this interesting Psalm. Avowing my conviction with the learned Horseley, that the Redeemer can be found in every page of the book of Psalms, by those who read to find him—I stated, that I regarded this one in particular, as exclusively applicable to Christ; that in close connexion with two other sublime, but deeply mysterious poems, it formed what may, perhaps, be termed, by a word well known to all students in Greek Dramatic Literature, a *sacred trilogy*, and with them completed the awful series of the ascension of the Messiah, and his in-

auguration into his mediatorial Kingdom.— In this Psalm we are admitted within the portals of Heaven, we hear the Father addressing the triumphant Son in the language of promise and of prophecy—declaring that he had “set him on his holy hill of Sion,” and had “placed all things under his feet;” that his great work had been accomplished—man’s redemption completed—his spiritual enemies subdued—and as a Priest and Prophet, intercessor and conqueror, the man Jesus Christ was to be placed for ever at the right hand of God. To this development of his offices, in subordination to the regal, do I conceive this Psalm dedicated, which opens by that exaltation of humanity in the person of the Redeemer, and closes by the cheering view of his influence poured out upon his followers; which commences by the execution of the decree that had been from everlasting, and terminates not until the mediatorial Kingdom has ceased, and “God,” the inscrutable triune Jehovah “becomes all in all.” I purpose in this discourse to continue the subject, to point out more minutely the bearing and connexion of the different parts of the Psalm, and to shew their coherence and connexion with the whole design. Before proceeding with this review, I would beseech my hearers to bear in mind, the justice of

Bishop Horsey's description of the Psalms of David, that they are "all poems of the lyric kind, that is, adapted to music, but with great variety in the style of composition—some are simply odes; in these the author delivers the whole matter in his own person—but a very great, I believe the far greater part, are a sort of dramatic ode, consisting of dialogues between persons sustaining certain characters—the persons are frequently the Psalmist himself, or the chorus of Priests and Levites, or the leader of the levitical band—Jehovah sometimes as one, sometimes as another of the three persons, Christ in his incarnate state, sometimes before, sometimes after his resurrection, and the human soul of Christ as distinguished from his divine essence—the part of Jehovah is sometimes supplied by an oracular voice, suddenly breaking out from the Sanctuary."—Such is the opinion of that great critic, whose originality of conception was equalled but by his clearness of diction, and extent of learning; who is almost unequalled for his variety of acquirement, and the manner in which he has dedicated all to the service of the Sanctuary.

I have stated my belief, that the subject of this sacred poem, was the reception of the Son of God in his Father's Kingdom, when

upborne by self-exerted power, he ascended thither, having accomplished the work which was given him to do, "having broken the gates of brass, and smitten the bars asunder." The elevation of Christ in his human nature to his heavenly throne, appears to me to be the object of the Psalm, and connected with this, the solemn recognition of the Saviour, in his intercessory character as Priest, and the outpouring of blessings from himself in his peculiar office as Prophet. I am induced to take this view from considering that the Psalm evidently contains the reception of some mighty Prince, and that the Messiah, though a conqueror, after that he burst the bands of death, and put to nought the grave, was not a King until his ascension. The promise of the Father was not fulfilled until having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them by the cross, until he "ascended on high, leading captivity captive," and having death and hell bound to his chariot wheels—until his ascension, though a conqueror, he was not in his mysteriously compounded nature, a King—the redemption throne was prepared, but not occupied—the diadem was won, but not worn. Although, if we may use the expression a King *de jure*,

from the moment of his resurrection, when he became the first fruits of those that slept, the first born of a new creation, he was not a King *de facto*, until he assumed the throne in Heaven, which he will occupy through all eternity, surrounded by his Church, hymning the praises of "the Captain of their salvation." Similar observations apply to the office of Priest, which is in the Psalm conferred on the ascended Saviour; his character as King would have been incomplete without the Priesthood, the brightest gem in the mediatorial, as in the patriarchal crown.

If the preceding view be just, the Messiah's assumption of the regal character conferred on him the priestly office, and neither of these sacred functions could have anticipated the other. It is I know regarded by many, that the Messiah performed the office of a Priest when he voluntarily resigned himself to the hands of his enemies, but this view appears to me erroneous, and liable to misconception. Christ was on earth the *Victim*, not the *Priest*, the *expiatory offering*, and not the *offerer*—to think otherwise, would be to confound two things essentially different, and to unite with marked impropriety, two types which cannot co-exist in the same person at the same time—when the Victim died, the typical priesthood must have ceased. The error has originated

in the notion, that it is essential to the Priest's office, that he should personally bring forward the Victim and assist in slaying it—such a notion is unfounded; the conveying the sacrifice to the temple, and the immolation of it there, was no part of the Priest's business—the inferior officers of the temple, or even the person on whose account it was to be offered might perform that duty, and the only part of the ceremony peculiar to the Priest, was the receiving the blood, which is the life of the beast, and pouring it out before the altar—he thus presented the offering to God, and made atonement for the guilty offerer. With this distinction in view, let us consider the sacrifice of Christ;—he was the Victim, the voluntary Victim—he was given up to the hands of Jews and Gentiles, that the sprinkling of his blood might be for both—he resigned himself to the death upon the cross for miserable sinners;—nor was this enough—the sacred blood must be poured out before the sacrificial throne of the Most High—the victim must be offered, and by the Priest, or no atonement is effected; and for this was Christ constituted a Priest, for this was he invested with the sacerdotal character, and having ascended on high, and presented his human nature before the throne, he continues a Priest for ever.

In perfect accordance with this view, is the important discussion on the priesthood of Christ, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We are told that he “glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”—that “being made perfect by death and sufferings, he became the Author of eternal salvation, called of God an High Priest.”—We are told that he was distinguished from all other Priests, inasmuch, as he was made or constituted with an oath, “the Lord sware and will not repent,” and the date of his priesthood seems to be fixed to his ascension, for the Apostle declares, that “if he were on earth, he should not be a Priest,—but now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry.” Christ then has been once offered to bear the sins of many, by the one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, he “hath entered in once into the holy place,” and “for ever sat down at the right hand of God.”

If these views be just, it would appear as if the Messiah during his tabernacling on earth, was invested with but *one* of those three offices, whose union forms his great peculiarity, and that his *full* assumption of the regal and priestly dignities was subsequent to his ascen-

sion, and it may be remarked in confirmation of this opinion, that as the office alluded to, the prophetic, ceased as to Christ's personal bearing, with his personal appearance on earth, it is but obscurely intimated in this Psalm, and rather in the light of a disseminated influence and blessing, attendant on his people, than as the high appendage of his glorified essence.

Having made these observations, as to the time in which our Redeemer, by whom all his people are made Priests and Kings unto God, became himself the supreme High Priest and Mediatorial King, and having endeavoured to connect these observations with the immediate subject of the Psalm; let us proceed to examine its language and connexion, assuming as its occasion the ascension of the blessed Jesus, and as its import his inauguration into his mediatorial Kingdom. The Prophet had in spirit accompanied his Master, his ear had drank in the hymns of the surrounding seraphs, who had declared the merits of that Mighty One, "who durst ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy place;" he had witnessed his triumph, who "led captivity captive," the God of his salvation, and he had heard him that rideth on the heavens send out a voice, yea, and that "a mighty voice," echoed by his ministering spirits, com-

manding the portals of Heaven to unfold, and to admit "the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, the Jehovah strong and mighty, the Jehovah mighty in battle;" and rapt with the angelic choir, he was admitted to view the scene, when "the everlasting gates lifted up their heads," and the Father received the Son: in the enjoyment of that mysterious privilege, he must, like Paul, have "heard" and seen "unspeakable things not lawful for a man to utter," but he has been permitted to reveal the divinely inspired decree, with which Jehovah received his Lord—constituting him "heir of all things, and putting all things under his feet." This decree do I conceive to be contained in the first four verses, which are addressed by the Father to the Son, and contain his exaltation, his dominion, and his priesthood—the two succeeding verses I would assign either to the Prophet addressing himself to the Messiah, or I would consider them as spoken by the surrounding and admiring seraphs, and the concluding passage is the declaration of Jehovah, or as Horsey would term it, "the oracular voice from the Sanctuary," predictive of the means and end of glory. Such would I propose, as a natural division of the dialogue in this sacred poem, to a brief consideration of whose language I would now solicit your attention.

“The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” It must be unnecessary to inform my hearers, that in the original there are different titles used to express that which our translators, departing from their usual judgment, but influenced by the example of the Septuagint and Vulgate have expressed by one word—“The divine decree of Jehovah to,” or concerning “Adonai,” would, perhaps, express the meaning correctly ; and to mark the peculiar solemnity of the occasion, the Psalmist has employed a word, which is almost always applied, and with peculiar force to the revelations of God by his Prophets, or to his “own sacred denunciations;”—it expresses, therefore, solemnity, inspiration and permanence—it is the voice of Jehovah—let the earth keep silence before him. The decree is promulgated by Jehovah, and addressed to Adonai, thus marking the difference of person between him who gives, and him who receives the kingdom ; between him the all-adorable, the self-existent, whom no man hath seen or can see, and the Son “the brightness of his Father’s glory, the express image of his person,” the revelation and promulgator of his word. To the former belongs all inherent power, and He is the source and spring of excellence; the sacred

name Jehovah properly belongs to him, and to the Son and Spirit, as partaking of the same essence, and sharing co-equally in the same glory, but to the Son in his mediatorial character, the name of Adonai, more peculiarly belongs—"it signifieth," says the learned Pearson, "properly and immediately, dominion implying a right of possession with a power of disposing, from authoritative and proper dominion:" and to whom but the Messiah is this name justly due? Who, independent of the sovereignty belonging to him as Jehovah, acquired a right by conquest, who in his human nature was "made both Lord and Christ," who, "because he humbled himself even unto the death of the cross," God in that nature "hath exalted above every name, raised from the dead, and placed at his own right hand, far above principalities and powers, and might and dominion"—who is made, as the name implies, the foundation of the gospel plan, and "head over all things to the Church," who is our Lord by creation, for "we are the work of his hands," who is our Lord by preservation, for "by him and for him all things consist," who is peculiarly our Lord by conquest and by purchase, for he hath "overcome him who had the power of death," and hath "redeemed us, not uptible

things, as silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood"—to him then alone of intelligent existence, is due the name and honours of "Adonai," and that supremacy of glory which is promised in the text.

By the session at the right hand of God, is implied the communion of power and glory with the Father, which was attached to the triumph of the mediatorial kingdom, the elevation of the human nature to the throne of grace, to a full participation in the unspeakable dignities of the Godhead.—"They enjoy," says St. Ambrose, "one throne, one majesty, they sit not as a distinction of dignity or order of power, but as a bond of love." To the excellent and learned Vitranga, I would refer any who are desirous of seeing the full import and meaning of this peculiar phrase, though I cannot assent to that admirable critic's observations on the concluding part of the verse. I would read it in connexion with the two succeeding verses; in Messiah's enemies being made his footstool, the promise of the gospel kingdom is conveyed; in the second verse, I see the means by which that kingdom was to be established, and in the third, the character of its subjects, and the extent of its sway. I have said, that in the making Messiah's enemies "his footstool," the promise of the gospel kingdom is con-

vayed, nor can I perceive in this strikingly figurative language, aught but the power of Jehovah employed to bring into subjection to Messiah's rule, those who had been his enemies. I know that many commentators have discovered in this expression, the destruction rather than the conversion and subjugation of his enemies; but although the everlasting judgment, and a dominion over even the inhabitants of hell belong to Christ, such is not, I conceive, here intended. I should rather suppose it to mean a conquest of conversion and subjection, the turning of the former enemies of Christ to minister to his will, and obey his pleasure. In the various passages in which the same word occurs illustrative of this, it is evident, that use and not destruction is the leading idea; earth, is called "the footstool of the Lord," Judea is peculiarly "his footstool," "the place of his feet" is promised to be "glorious," and his anger against Israel is termed "a forgetting of his footstool." I would then think, that it intimates a dominion, but a dominion of conversion, by which his enemies become his people and he their God, by which those who had opposed his power become the willing instruments for extending his sacred name.

In the succeeding verse, the instrument of this conversion is declared; it is the rod of Messiah's

strength, which going forth from Zion, enforces his dominion even in the hearts of his enemies. When we recollect that a short time preceding the period at which we have fixed the composition of this Psalm, David had taken possession of the strong city of Zion, and doubtless from divine authority, had resolved to dwell there, we may see a propriety of allusion in the mention of this name, which is confirmed, when we compare with it the Prophet's declaration, that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," and with our Lord's commands to his Apostles, to "preach in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem." The word of the Lord, his law, his doctrine, his gospel, is the rod or sceptre of his strength; it is "the power of God unto salvation," strong to the subduing the affections, the pulling down the strong holds of pride, of error, of ambition, and to "the bringing every thought into captivity to Christ;" by its influence is the kingdom of Christ established and maintained, a kingdom of truth, and piety, and holiness;—it is "the rod of the Messiah's strength," for by the divine influence alone can this sceptre be blessed, and the word of the Lord not "return to him void, but prosper in the thing whereunto it is sent:"—hence

is the Messiah's Kingdom spiritual; it bears rule, not merely in the midst, but in the interior, in the hearts of his enemies, and hence is it universal, for no limits for it are marked out, and wherever Messiah's enemies are to be found, there may his rule extend. Thus does Messiah continue to be a Prophet even when seated on his throne, and by his sacred influence is his Kingdom founded and extended.

The Psalmist proceeds to characterize this people.—“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness.” They shall be a people connected by a common bond, partaking of common blessings, and voluntary agents in advancing the Redeemer's Kingdom;—a people distinguished by the internal graces of the Holy Spirit, and characterised by *spontaneity*, by a voluntary devotion of their strength, their power, their faculties, to their Master's service—a people distinguished too for external graces, for the garb of sanctity and devotion, for garments suited to the service of the sanctuary, and adorned with the beauties of holiness—and these graces shall be vouchsafed in the day of Messiah's power, when having left behind on earth all of human infirmity that could attach itself to his person, he has re-assumed “his own and his Father's glory,” and

sent down the blessed Spirit to lead, direct, and govern his Church. Such do I conceive to be the division and meaning of the verse; it contains a description of that people, in whom and over whom Messiah was to reign by the rod of his strength, a rod humbling, yet exalting, correcting, yet cheering, whose influence is felt in the enlightening of the understanding, the rectifying of the will, and the purifying of the affections. The second clause of this verse points out how great was to be the company of those who received and recognised this rod—"the dew of thy progeny is more than that of the womb of the morning," as Bishop Louth justly and beautifully translates it—thy children begotten to thee through the Gospel, will exceed in number and in spiritual beauty, the spangles of the early dew which reflect in brilliant radiancy the beams of the orient sun—and thus is the people of the Messiah characterised, as offering under the influence of Christ's power, the spiritual worship of the Gospel, as being clothed in the pure and sanctifying garb of holiness, as being more numerous and brilliant than "the dew from the morning,"—and such is the kingdom of the Messiah, a kingdom established in judgment and justice, whose subjects are redeemed by Christ's sacrifice, preserved by his influence,

adorning his doctrine, and protected by his Priesthood; and in that Priesthood we see the end and consummation of God's mysterious scheme, without which Christ's reign would be a reign of terror, and his sceptre one of iron—in that Priesthood which is confirmed by the unchangeable declaration of God himself, “the Priesthood after the order” or matters “of Melchisedec.” Of the Mosaic sacrifices Christ was the antitype, and they ceased—of the Levitical Priesthood he was the fulfilment, and it was abolished—but the Patriarchal Priesthood, which was universal and not limited, which was one of intercession and blessing, not of repeated immolation—which was more ancient than the Mosaic Institution, and to which the Father of the Faithful paid homage—this was the order of the Messiah's Priesthood; it completed and sanctified his kingly office, and by it was reconciliation with God, and the infinite blessings of redemption sealed to Abraham's spiritual children.

The two verses which succeed this solemn close of God's decree, are evidently to be given to another speaker—they address Jehovah, and are spoken of Adonai. This is not perceived in our common Bibles, where the word *Lord* is usually marked by a larger character, which is the common mode of ex-

pressing the Hebrew Jehovah. They require but little comment ; they contain in strong and energetic symbolism, the destruction which will be manifested upon Messiah's enemies, when the day of forbearance shall have expired, when the sins and provocations of the ungodly shall be ripe for judgment, and He the man Jesus Christ, shall descend in his own and his Father's glory, to execute judgment and justice on all the obstinate workers of iniquity. Whether this awful display of divine retribution precedes or follows the final judgment, whether the Psalmist alludes to the condemnation of the apostate faction, which we are taught to believe, will in the latter day array itself against the Lord and his Christ, or to the last awful distribution of justice, when the throne shall be set, and the books shall be opened, it matters not to the subject of our Psalm.— Christ, the Messiah, the Word, is equally the agent in both, and whether as conqueror or judge, he is identified by the Prophet and the Apostle with the Antient of Days, the rider upon the white horse, as he “who in righteousness doth judge, and doth make war.” It is deserving of notice, that the execution of judgment is here as in all other places of Scripture, assigned to the Redeemer as his peculiar office, while in the first three verses,

the task of extending the Redeemer's kingdom is given to Jehovah, as if to mark the agency of another person of the Godhead, to display the mysterious influence of the blessed Spirit, and to prove that man's redemption is but the development of the character of the ever blessed Trinity. By this consideration is the union of the Father and the Son rendered consistent with the economy of grace, and the difficulty of Jehovah's agency in the establishment of Messiah's reign reconciled with his sovereignty, a difficulty which Vitranga has mentioned, but has not removed.

The last verse has been supposed to allude either to Christ's character as a conqueror, or to his humiliation and subsequent triumph. I have been induced to take a different view. I cannot but consider as harsh, the metaphors which the advocates of the former opinion would introduce, and the passages of Scripture adduced in support of the latter, seem to me to derive their meaning from the context in which they are found, and not to bear upon the point.—I would consider the passage before us, as a parallel to that of Isaiah, in which he declares, that “in the day of the great slaughter, there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill,

rivers and streams of water ;” I would interpret it of the effusion of divine grace, so often figured in Scripture under the image of that fluid so necessary for the support of human life, and I would translate the passage before us in the following manner, with but a small deviation from our version, “he shall make,” or give “to drink of the stream on the way, and thus shall he raise up the head.” The Hebrew scholar will perceive that the change in the original is but of one conjugation to another, and affects only the vowel points, an unessential part of the language ;—he may, perhaps, agree with me, that the original word which we have translated, “brook,” is best explained as a current of water, which makes its way among interposing hills, and whose course is perceptible, but by the verdure of its banks, and the riches of its overhanging foliage, and therefore, forming no unsuitable image of the operations of the Spirit, whose influence is often compared to “rain upon the mown hay, or showers that water the earth,” who maketh his fruits to “spring up as among the grass, like willows by the water courses ;” and that this interpretation which has been hinted by an obscure, but learned critic, giving meaning to a passage confessedly difficult, and presenting a most cheer-

ing contrast for Christ's servants and soldiers, with the fate that awaits the impenitent, forms no inconsistent conclusion to a Psalm, which developes with such amazing accuracy the agency of God in man's redemption, his bounty in promising, his faithfulness in executing, the destruction which awaits the impenitent, and the blessings which are prepared for the righteous.

May these awful truths be brought home with power to our hearts, may we receive Messiah as our King, believe in him as our Prophet, and trust in his atonement as our Priest, and when the day of his visitation comes, may we be enabled to say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us—this is our Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Amen.

Page 311.—*Whether in regard, &c.* ἡ δὲ τῶν ψαλμῶν ἱβλος, τὸ ἐκ πάντων ὠφέλιμον περιέληψε. προφητεύει τα μέλ-
οντα, ἱστορίας ὑπομνήσκει, νομοθετεῖ τῷ βίῳ, υποτίθεται τὰ
ρακτέα· καὶ ἀπαξ ἀπλῶς κοινὸν ταμεῖόν ἐστιν ἀγαθῶν διδαγ-
μάτων, τὸ ἐκάστῳ πρόσφορον κατὰ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἐξευρίσκουσα.
—Basil. Hom. in Ps. 1.

Page 312.—*A late most learned commentator, &c.* Dr.
Adam Clarke.

Page 313.—*Consecrated to the public service, &c.* There
is reason to believe that, from a very early period, the Psalms
of David were employed in public worship by the Jews. The
Hallel, or Passover Hymn, which our blessed Lord is said to
have sung with his disciples, consisted of the Psalms from
cxiii. to cxviii. inclusive; and they have been constantly used
in the worship of the Christian Church.

Page 314.—*Bishop Horsey.* Horsey's Psalms. i. xiv.

— *In that drama, &c.* Vide Horsey's Psalms,
p. xv.

Page 316.—*None of the sacred, &c.* Matt. xxii. 55. and
pp. loc.; Acts ii. 56. 1 Cor. xv. 25. Heb. i. v. vii. &c. The
observations which occur in the note, page 152—157, to the
present learned Bishop of Chester's "Dissertation on the
Traditional Knowledge of a Promised Redeemer," are so sa-
tisfactory, that I shall satisfy myself with referring to them.
They prove the general concurrence of our Lord's contempo-
raries as to the interpretation of the Psalm; the straits to

NOTES TO SERMONS XVI. AND XVII.

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Page 314.—*Bishop Horsey.* Horsey's Psalms. i. xiv.

— *In that drama, &c.* Vide Horsey's Psalms, p. xv.

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which the modern Jews are reduced by their application of it; and the false reasoning as well as loose religion which hangs upon the modern school of German divinity, in attempting to explain it otherwise than of Christ, and, if of Christ, as a prophecy. I shall only add, in proof the same opinion being held by the early Christian Church, a few authorities from the early Fathers: Clement *in Epist. ad Cor.* 36. applies it to Christ; Barnabas, in chap. xii. interprets it similarly; Justin Martyr, in *Dial. cum. Tryph.* and Tertull. *advers. Mar.* refute the Jews, who applied it to Hezekiah; Lactantius *Jns. Div.* iv. 12. not only follows their footsteps, but seems to point at its reference to the ascension of Christ; Origin, Eusebius, and Chrysostom, are of the same opinion, as to its direct application to the Redeemer. In the beginning of the last century, a controversy of some consequence was excited among the German Protestants, by Masson's applying the Psalm to David; he was refuted by Martin, Lampe, and others. Since that time many German Divines, following the footsteps of Mendelsohn, have attempted to apply it to David and others. Ilgenius supposes it to be a congratulatory ode on the taking of Rabba; Eckman supposes that it was written and addressed to David after the translation of the ark, and that the allegorical and typical meaning was never thought of until after the Babylonish captivity. Herder entirely applies it to David; Pfeiffer understands the first and second verses of the Philistines, and the last of the Israelites' passage of the Jordan; Borkh interprets it of Solomon; and De Wette going still farther, characterises the application of this Psalm to the Messiah, as absurd and impious, and supposes it to be an ode addressed to some Asmonæan Prince, probably to John Hyrcanus, who he thinks was in a peculiar sense a *royal priest*. Vide Bergman Comment. in Psal. cx. 12—20. Such interpretations disfiguring such learning as these critics generally possess, read an awful lesson to the students in theology.

Page 319.—*The learned Venema.* "Est oraculi divini partim ad Dominum Davidis, partem ad Davidem pertinentis

promulgatio, quâ Deus oratione primum ad Dominum Davidis versa, introducit, eum ad summam dignitatem, regiam et sacerdotalem, in cœlis, ad exemplum Melchizedeci, evehere, cum promisso amplissimi et florentissimi regni, in Tsione fundandi, et inde sese quaquaversum dilatandi inter medios hostes, donec omnia inimica essent pedibus subjecta : deinde ad ipsum Davidem sermonem flectens, ipsum illum dominum ad dextram ipsius fore, hostesque regni ejus, ut antea sic et in posterum prostraturum, eoque facto per multos labores et passiones sibi viam ad summam illam potestatem in cœlo paraturum esse, declarare sistitur.”—*H. Venema. Commentarius in Psalmos.* vol. iv. 760.

Page 320.—*He objects that.* “Interpretes quidam et illam Psalmi partem posteriorem ad Messiam, hostes regni et ecclesiæ suæ prostraturum referre solent, licet sibi non constent, cum quod versum quintum de hostilibus regibus, sub V. T. a domino deletis, interpretentur nonnulli eorum, tum quod versum septimum de passionibus et eas secuta gloria capere soleant. Ex mea opinione de Domino illo, tanquam Davidis ejusque regni paterno, et viam ad regnum suum cœleste parante agitur, vers. 5-7.” *Venema, iv. 767.*

“Dominus hic occurrit hostes sibi subjiciens, cum in priori pericopa ad dextram Dei sedeat, et Deus hostes ipse subjecturus dicatur.—Nec nullius est, phrases in hostiles et bellicas expeditiones rectius convenire quæ ad V. T. magis quam N. T. tempora sunt accommodatæ.” *Venema iv. 767.*

Page 323.—*In the fifth chapter, &c.* “Nonnulla sese mihi obtulerunt criteria, quæ mentem eo inclinarunt, ut haud diu post arcam Tsionem translatam, et promissum de regno inter posteros Davidis perpetuo, ac Messia ex umbis ejus nascituro, antequam regnum inter populos vicinos gentiles propagasset David, eum a spiritu correptum, et in hanc contemplationem Messiae, ad dextram dei exaltandi, ductum fuisse, et hoc carmen pepigisse.”—*Venema, iv. 762.*

Page 333.—*Bishop Horsey's description, &c.* Horsey's Psalms, i. xiv.

Page 335.—*Such a notion is unfounded.* See Archbishop

Magee on the Atonement, vol. 1. 301, 303—and the authors there quoted, particularly Cudworth's discourse on "the true nature of the Sacrament."

Page 337.—*In perfect accordance, &c.* Heb. v. 4, 5, 6, 7. vii. 16, 23, 24, 25, 26. Through the whole of this epistle Christ is never introduced as a priest, but subsequent to his having laid aside mortality, iv. 14. vi. 20. vii. 26. viii. 1—4, &c. The blood of the ram of consecration invested Aaron with his office (Lev. viii. 22, 25.); and hence Christ must have been consecrated to his priesthood by his blood, therefore must have suffered before that consecration. While writing this passage, I was not aware that the same opinion had been advocated by any Divine; but I find myself anticipated and supported by the learned Archibald M'Clean, in his Paraphrase and Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, App. III. to which I refer the reader.

Page 340.—"*The divine decree.*" The Targum has it, "The Lord said in his word," or as Galatinus declares the true Targum of Jonathan, "The Lord says to his word," *Gill*. The learned reader is aware of the different opinions as to the pointing of the word יְיָדָא, which Rosenmuder would make similar to that in the 5th ver. The Jews of our Lord's time do not seem to have known the difference, as they recognised *David's Lord* in the first.

Page 342.—*To the excellent and learned Vitringa.* "Ego vero existimo, tum φράσιν hanc *sedere ad dextram Dei*, aptissimam esse ad clare et proprie representandum omne μυστήριον δωζασμε *Filii Dei*; tum eam primâ sua in significatione non tam *honorem*, quam *officium*, et officio junctam dignitatem aliquam insignem denotare, ex qua *honor* et *gloria* mediatoris post ipsum in cœlos evectum orta sunt; hoc est *communicationem Imperiû*, ejusdem et summi, quod habebat Pater: ita ut *Sedere ad dextram Patris* proprie et directè sit *participem esse Regni Patris*."—Vitringa *Observ. Sacræ*. lib. ii. 303. Vitringa supports this opinion with his usual learning and ingenuity, particularly from 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13; and Acts ii. 54—in which the session at the right

hand of God, is synonymous with *reigning* (βασιλευν,) and with being *made*, that is *constituted and declared* Lord and Christ (κύριον καὶ Χριστόν ὁ Θεὸς ἐποίησε.) The difficulty alluded to in the text is thus stated by Vitranga: "Non *Filio* sed *Patri* tribuitur *ponere hostes scabellum pedum Filii*; *Patri* non *Filio*, assignatur τὸ *mittere sceptrum*. Vitrang. Obs. Sac. ii. 312 The reader will find the view I have been induced to take of this difficulty in pp. 348, 9. Vitranga solves it by the joint government and common union of power between the Father and the Son. Zech. vi. 13—"ne quis tamen existimaret patrem omni regimini se abdicasse; *pater in filio et per filium regnat*," Vitranga, 313.

Page 349.—Many critics have found or made considerable difficulty in the Psalmist's expression, "until," ἕως. The opinion of Bergman seems to be very rational, "Jam satis apparet, hanc questionem ex ipsius, quæ agitur, rei natura non solummodo e grammaticorum legibus, esse dirimendam. Res autem et dicendi ratio vetant statuere, particulam ἕως, donec, ponere terminum sessioni ad dextram. Quid enim? Mos est, ut videmus, in orienti, ut qui throno insidiat subsellium pedibus suppositum habeat. Jam concedit poeta Domino suo *sedem in throno* divino, at sine subsellio: mox, hostibus subactis, hi *subselli loco* pedibus ejus subjiçientur. Subiguntur hostes, durite jacent, subsellium pedibus subjiçientur. Absurdum dictu, nunc, *sedem vacuam* a domino relictum iri."—Bergman Commentatio in Ps. cx. 86. The passage in 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. seems to have respect to a different period; the Psalmist, speaking of the progress of Messiah's kingdom—the Apostle, of its completion.

Page 350.—*An obscure but learned critic* Mudge in his Translation of the Psalms.



